TELOS

Number 82 Winter 1989-90

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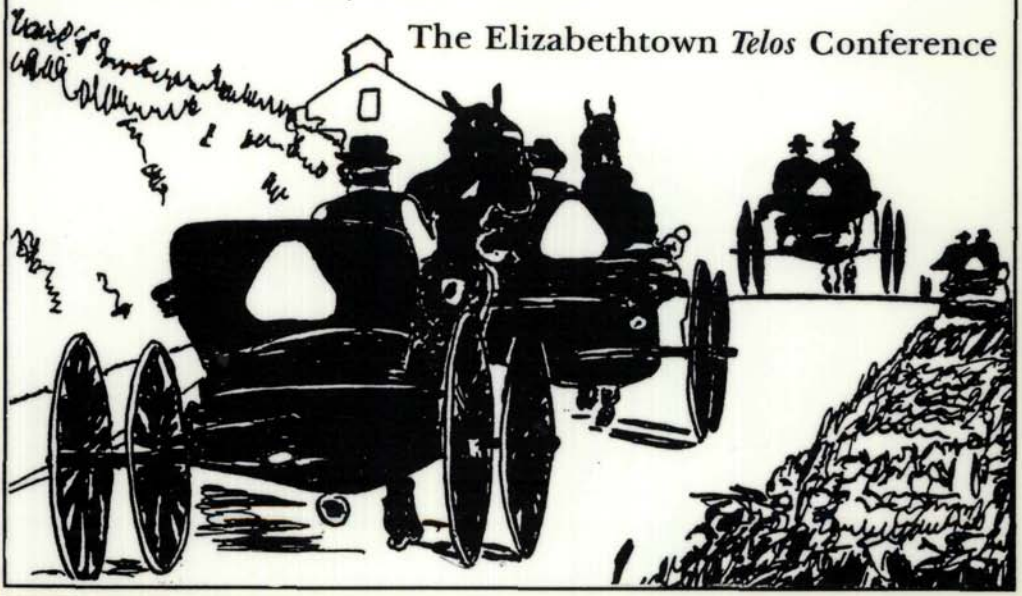
An Interview with Norberto Bobbio

Does Critical Theory have a Future?

The Elizabethtown *Telos* Conference



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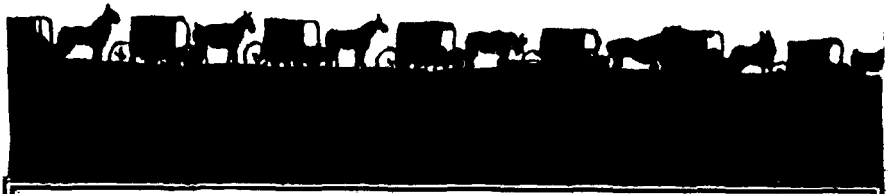

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*The End of "East German Socialism"**

Sigrid Meuschel

In August, 1989, before the start of the East German revolution, Otto Reinhold, one of the SED's (Socialist Unity Party: Communist) chief ideologues, tied East Germany's "right to exist" to its "socialist identity." He argued that, since East Germany could exist only as a socialist alternative to capitalist West Germany, the Party's social strategy had to be to "consolidate the socialist order."[1] Reinhold's position was almost as old as the East German state whose future it sought to secure. During the first weeks of the revolution, this position was still plausible, not only within the Party, but also within the intelligentsia and parts of the politically engaged citizenry. No other East European opposition movement had considered itself socialist for so long and to such an extent as in East Germany. Yet the particular "East German socialism" that state and Party leaders were advocating in response to reforms in the Soviet Union, Poland, and Hungary has obviously lost whatever public support it had. Why was East Germany so stable and well integrated for such a long period of time; why was its society more or less satisfied with a highly authoritarian and technocratic socialism; and why only now has the question of democracy been perceived as a political problem?

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* Translated by Judith D. Weston and David Pan. In order to save space, footnotes have been left out of the first two, primarily historical, sections of the article. For additional information, see Günter Erbe *et. al.*, *Politik, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft in der DDR* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1980); Gert-Joachim Glaeßner, ed., *Die DDR in der Ära Honecker* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1988); Dietrich Staritz, *Die Gründung der DDR* (Munich: Deutsche Taschenbuch Verlag, 1984); Dietrich Staritz, *Geschichte der DDR 1949-85* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1985); Hartmut Zimmermann, "Politische Aspekte in der Herausbildung, dem Wandel und der Verwendung des Konzepts 'Wissenschaftlich-technische Revolution' in der DDR," *Deutschland Archiv* (Sonderheft, 1976), pp. 17ff.; and Hartmut Zimmermann and Klaus von Beyme, eds., *Policymaking in the German Democratic Republic* (Aldershot: Gower Verlag, 1984)

1. Otto Reinhold, Director of the Academy for the Social Sciences of the SED Central Committee, in a Radio DDR program reported in *Tageszeitung* (August 28, 1989).

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The National Question and Technocratic Reform

The national question explains why democratic reform was slower in coming in East Germany than in other Soviet bloc countries. It encompasses more than just those problems that have resulted from the partition of Germany or from relations between the two German states. Various aspects of a "German apolitical culture" are also at play. The word "apolitical" refers both to the traditional lack of political interest and to undemocratic traditions. While an extensive discussion of this syndrome is beyond the scope of this article, it is possible to address why there has been no public criticism of Stalinism in East Germany which could have paved the way for democratization.

The current generation of political reformers in the Soviet Union was not shaped by the experiences of war and Stalinism, but by the first phase of de-Stalinization in the 1950s. They witnessed a purge of part of the Stalinist elite, a power struggle, a political change of course, and an open and broad criticism of Stalinism. Despite the failure of these efforts, public criticism would never again be completely banished from the Party or society. The Khrushchev era may well be viewed as the beginning of *samizdat* and dissidence in the Soviet Union.

The SED and East German society as a whole lack such a historical precedent. There were no reform attempts that could be considered "anti-Stalinist." Before 1989 no old guard Stalinist ever lost power because of pressure from either within or without the Party, and the rehabilitation of the victims of Stalinism occurred essentially *en passant* and was never completed. No groups within the Party, society or even the intelligentsia ever tried to force a public debate. In other words, only recently has anti-Stalinism become a significant force in East Germany.

Why did East Germany fail to take advantage of the historic opportunity for reform initiated at the 20th Soviet Party Congress? Here the "apolitical" character of anti-fascism played an important role. On the one hand, National Socialism understandably drained the moral potential of those who were attempting to confront Germany's immediate past and its implications for the present. On the other hand, because after 1948-49 the SED's brand of anti-fascism became one-sided, it functioned tactically as a means of "overcoming" both the past and the present. On the assumption that anti-fascism was equivalent to anti-imperialism, and that capitalism led to fascism, the Nazi past was considered closed with East Germany's anti-fascist, democratic and, later, socialist transformation. Along with this economic rather than political or cultural "overcoming" of fascism was an excessive use of the critique of fascism. Directed mainly against such bastions of imperialism

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as West Germany, the US, bourgeois parties, and social democrats, this accusation tended to diminish the totalitarian quality of Nazism and defuse a crucial democratic argument against Stalinism.

Anti-fascism was thus a means of coping both with the Stalinist present and the Nazi past. Structural and personal denazification were equally thorough in the Soviet occupation zone. Yet the other side of denazification, the politicization of all of society, never became a public problem. The shock of Nazism seemed to justify the kind of socialism that followed. Aside from its effect on political justice, the equation of anti-Stalinism with anti-communism became a rhetorical weapon against critics of Stalinism. In East Germany the futile "fascism vs. Stalinism" dichotomy lived on after WWII. It can be seen in the lack of efforts to democratize, in prejudices against "renegades," and in an inability to comprehend the normative core of "Western" critiques of communism. This also explains the readiness to impute "fascist motives" to those who took part in the 1953 uprising.

The necessary social and political alliances that made open anti-Stalinism possible in Poland, Hungary, and later Czechoslovakia, never coalesced in East Germany during the 1950s and 1960s. The intelligentsia kept a distance from strikers in 1953 and neither sought nor received proletarian support. The SED and politically engaged intellectuals shared the belief that the people were not yet ready for democracy. The 1953 uprising had shown that the people were more likely to rebel against current communist rule than against the earlier fascist dictatorship and were thus in need of further anti-fascist education. With the intelligentsia participating in the Party's educational project, the SED was able to stop unrest in universities and artists' and writers' unions simply by making cultural concessions. Within the SED itself, anti-Stalinist elements were neither willing nor able to fight for a constituency within the Party and among the people, nor to openly present a leader for political change. In 1953 and in 1956-7, opposition within the Party remained isolated. Instead of relying on its own strength or on the people's support, it hoped for a power struggle within the CPSU (Soviet Communist Party). In addition to the unifying force of anti-fascism, the national climate fostered the fear that a political restructuring in East Germany, indeed, any politically unstable phase, would endanger the state and, with it, socialism as such. This fear carried even more weight after those who had advocated a new political course in 1953 were accused, along with Beria, of having tried to "sell out" East Germany to an (at best) social democratic reunion with West Germany.

As a result, East Germans have not been able to draw upon a tradition

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of dissidence, criticism of Stalinism, or open Party struggles. What emerged instead of a democratic critique of their own past and present was a tradition of technical and instrumental reforms. Introduced in 1955 by old guard Party leaders, these reforms were carried out in cooperation with the technical intelligentsia. De-Stalinization was limited to the "economic mechanism," which included economic planning, administration, and technical development. The tradition of technocratic reform itself underwent considerable changes. While in the 1960s it still contained utopian features, after 1971 it conformed to the pragmatism of "really existing socialism." This technocratic tradition, however, is partially responsible for East Germany's economic success relative to the rest of Eastern Europe.

The national question and the partition of Germany also affected East German reform strategies by engendering strong resistance to social democracy within the SED. The need to differentiate itself from the SPD (Social Democratic Party) and from social democratic projects grew out of a long history of political enmity and conflicting perspectives. The communists in the SED seemed convinced that their social model, once established, would be more attractive than the social democratic alternative. After all, they were still waiting for the crisis of capitalism, which would once again reveal the merely "formal" character of "bourgeois democracy" and the destructive power of the market.

The SED's resistance to social democracy intensified after Germany was divided. Reunification could only take place when all the occupied zones could agree on a single political system. Even the SED's anti-fascist, democratic transformation, despite its early affinity with democratic socialism, was too radical to mobilize a majority in Germany as a whole. Thus it was clear that the SED's subsequent open orientation toward Soviet-style socialism was not an option for all of Germany. Therefore, those in the SED and in the Soviet occupied zone who wanted national unification had only two alternatives. Either they seriously considered a "German path to socialism" and assumed a social democratic position, or, along with the Party elite, took the offensive: they distanced themselves from social democracy, declared themselves the socialist vanguard of the entire nation, and, like the first postwar West German SPD leader, Kurt Schumacher (although with other premises), trusted in the "magnetism" of the new order they were creating and hoped to see fulfilled within the foreseeable future. This strategy explains much of the virulence of the campaigns against social democracy, which were directed not only against the West German Social Democrats, but more importantly against those SED members who were as interested in a

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quick solution to the problem of unification as they were in constructing socialism. They were consequently ready to accept, or even wanted, a different kind of socialism than the Party had in mind. After 1956, the strong opposition to democratic socialism turned into a struggle against anti-Stalinist revisionism. Thus the tradition of technocratic reform had more than one cause.

The "national question" also affected the formation, or, more precisely, the absence of a political opposition. Because of the ease with which they could move to West Germany, many potential reformers simply left. Those who stayed behind felt that emigration to capitalist, crudely anti-communist and barely de-nazified West Germany was an act of desertion. Consequently they remained loyal to SED rule. Since the partition, both emigration and the "in spite of everything" attitude of those who stayed have reduced the chances for the development of either an oppositional political culture or pressure for democratic reforms.

East Germany's political culture and uncertain national status were responsible for yet another factor contributing to the lack of opposition. Since there was no self-evident national basis for SED rule, the Party bolstered its otherwise unpopular socialist model with national identity. Until the Soviet Union officially granted sovereignty to East Germany in the mid-1950s, the construction of socialism was accompanied by a nationalist pathos. The SED celebrated the greatness of the German *Kulturnation* with a shocking continuity with the past. Directing its nationalist impulse to the entire German nation, the SED claimed to be the "only national party": first, due to its refusal to accept "Germany's downfall," and, second, because, from a Marxist-Leninist viewpoint, only the SED and socialism could create an adequate social basis upon which to build the future of "the nation." Combining anti-bourgeois and anti-capitalist arguments with anti-cosmopolitan and anti-Semitic elements, the Party's propaganda revealed a peculiar mixture of nationalist and socialist orientations. Though this mixture was borrowed from Soviet campaigns, it resonated with traditional elements of German cultural and national self-definition.

Compared to other East European states, East Germany was in the peculiar position of possessing no collective national consciousness in its own right. The SED portrayed East German society as a small, radical minority within the greater German nation, a Piedmont whose existence could only be insured by enforcing extreme discipline and unanimity in the national (class) struggle. This appeal to internal unity was combined with the notion of a foreign enemy whose potential external threat served to justify the struggle against the "internal enemy." Consequently,

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in order to hold East Germany up as an example for the entire nation, the SED not only continued the tradition of German cultural nationalism but expanded it to include the well-known "friend-enemy" dichotomy. In the end, these endeavors diverted social agents from seeking to democratize the political system on the basis of an independent, national community.

The combination of nationalism and socialism was a two-fold offer of integration. Then came the sobering reality of two separate German states. The resulting disillusionment encouraged support for technocratic reforms on whose basis an independent state consciousness was slowly developing. The technocratic socialist model, with its commitment to scientific and technical progress, redefined the rivalry between the two German states. If the new technologies just being introduced in the West could be used more efficiently in the East, then social integration in East Germany would follow. After the late 1950s, competition between the two German states was defined by the SED primarily in terms of better planning, organization, and efficiency. The lack of a democratic destalinization, the division of Germany, and the competitive situation between the two German states combined to promote technocratic reform.

The SED between Conformity and Autonomy

The beginning of democratic reform was thwarted not only by the SED's technocratic emphasis, but also by its ideological inertia. The latter was due to the compelling need for conformity that characterized the Party's politics. Because of the precarious national basis of the Party's rule, the SED had a compelling interest in maintaining the political cohesion of the Soviet bloc. Furthermore, it was vital that the basic structures of the various socialist states coincide so that the SED could make a clear distinction between its principles and those of its West German rival. From the Party's perspective, East Germany's continued existence depended on adherence to a well-defined Soviet model of socialism.

Conversely, East Germany's sovereignty could best be protected against West Germany if all socialist countries were the same, both ideologically and structurally. Yet such a state of affairs seems to have been the exception in the history of the Soviet bloc. It existed at the beginning of Stalinist consolidation and, subsequently, there were attempts to re-establish it following every crisis. But the SED also satisfied its need for conformity by creating in East Germany a model of compliance with Soviet ideological standards, thereby protecting its autonomy with respect both to West Germany and the Soviet bloc. Any disintegration of the bloc would have threatened East Germany as a whole. Revisionist and reformist tendencies all blurred the distinctly socialist, non-Western,

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anti-bourgeois and anti-capitalist socialism that the SED required in order to guarantee East Germany's existence as a state. The Party could maintain this distinction on its own for a time, but not indefinitely.

From the SED's perspective, it was clear that it should act consistently to defend adherence of all "brother parties" to Marxist-Leninist principles. As early as 1946, discussion concerning whether there was a "special German path to socialism" rested on indispensible underlying tenets: the dictatorship of the proletariat; the "true" science of Marxism (as Marxism-Leninism and, at that time, Stalinism were still described); the working class and "its" Party's claim to leadership; and the political, organizational and social alliance of workers and peasants. The translation of these tenets into new property relations was already underway by the late 1940s, when the "new" Stalinist-type Party and the centrally planned economy completed the adaptation to the Soviet model.

At the same time, the SED attached great importance to autonomy. When, shortly before the communist integration of the Social Democratic Party in 1946, communist ideologists emphasized that Germany should not be forced to go "the Soviet way," it was primarily a rhetorical ploy. This dissociation was necessary, however, since a Communist Party could not gain any political footing in the Soviet occupied zone of Germany without demonstrating its relative independence from the occupying power. The claims of independence were therefore emphatically nationalistic: the socio-political project was not to be American, British, French or Russian, but "German." On the one hand, the Party sought to build an historical heritage for its own brand of German uniqueness when it called on the people to complete the 1848 revolution, to avoid the mistakes of 1918, and to overcome Nazism. On the other hand, the Party's nationalistic appeal had an anti-Western, anti-bourgeois pathos that has accompanied the argument for a uniquely German *Kulturnation* since the 19th century. Ironically, this pathos assumed the guise of antifascism and has remained an integral part of East German identity. The warmth, security, cultured lifestyle and solidarity of the East are contrasted — not unjustifiably — with West German coldness, individualism, and cut-throat competition.

As early as 1946 "the German path to socialism" rested on the superior technical and cultural development of German industrial society. Whenever it became necessary for East Germany to assert its autonomy within the socialist alliance, it was done in terms of its high level of industrial development and its appropriately socialized society. The SED considered these material and cultural qualities especially favorable prerequisites for establishing socialism. Yet it soon became apparent that

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the Stalinist model of economic planning and administration was ineffective. Technocratic reform and independent development within the socialist bloc were stimulated in East Germany mainly by the desire to develop a modern and efficient industrial socialism.

After Stalin's death, a new policy was gradually deployed in the USSR primarily in order to remedy the deficiencies of the Stalinist economy. This move toward a "scientific-technological revolution" was well received by the SED, which was extremely interested in reorganizing its planning and administrative mechanisms. By the mid-1950s, the previous system had managed to remedy the damage of war and German partition. In order to compete with West Germany, however, the transition to intensive production was necessary. The imposition of socialism had already run into a crisis by 1953, precipitating an explosion on the 17th of June. The Stalinist theory that the economic laws of socialism, the Party's stewardship, and socialist property relations would guarantee smooth development gave way to more complex ideas, including discussions of "bureaucracy," "purely administrative methods," "operative self-determination of enterprises," "economic accounting" and "strengthening the local organs of state power." In the same way that the Soviets tried to come to grips with the scientific-technological revolution, before the 20th Party Congress East Germans also confronted topics such as commodity production and the law of value, the combination of science and production, and the modification of Party-controlled state planning and management. After the Congress, the SED feared that the discussion would be deflected by revisionist positions. At the same time, the political dynamics set in motion by Soviet reconciliation with Yugoslavia and China threatened bloc cohesion, as was drastically demonstrated by developments in Poland and Hungary.

At the end of 1951, after East Germany became an open member of the Soviet bloc, the SED, along with the Czech Communist Party, became the bloc's guardian of its unity and conformity — precisely what guaranteed East Germany's very existence. Its rejection of a "third way" reflected the Party's anxieties concerning their distinctly non-Western model of socialism and meant that any dysfunctions would not be solved through changes in property relations, the introduction of a controlled market economy or elements of "formal bourgeois" democracy. The Party leadership also opposed criticism of Stalinism, using arguments which, under changed circumstances, could be characterized as its first campaign against what has come to be known as *glasnost* and *perestroika*.

The suppression of the Hungarian revolution in 1956 led to a renewed ideological consolidation of the bloc. The revisionist "ideological

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coexistence" was abolished in favor of a conformity of systems and ideologies. By the late 1950s the stage was set for bloc-wide technocratic reforms. The CPSU outlined the contours of post-Stalinist conformity at its 21st Party Congress in 1959. Open repression would no longer constitute the main political means of consolidating power. Rather, scientific and technological potential were to be developed by exploiting the "advantages of socialism": the planning, organizational and educational capacities of socialism were to be used to achieve a technological revolution. The SED was not alone in this optimistic mood expressed in the goal of catching up with and overtaking capitalism as soon as possible. But East Germany's combination of *telos* and technocracy was unique.

The SED implemented these reforms in the 1960s under Ulbricht. East Germany already met many preconditions, such as the motives and expectations of an industrial society. Releasing science from Stalinist dogmatism made it possible for the Party bureaucracy and the intelligentsia to develop into technocrats and ideologues. It also became possible for parts of the working class, the intelligentsia, and the Party apparatus to join in an alliance which resulted in the scientific-technological revolution and the modernization of industry. The SED followed the Soviet example in its restructuring of the state economic apparatus as well as in its reorganization of the Party according to the "production principle." Although the New Economic System was developed by Evsej G. Liberman, the SED was able to implement this system much better than the CPSU. The SED was thus able to plot the course of the scientific-technological revolution and to promote rational economic behavior without having to resort to market mechanisms.

The new post-Stalinist emphasis on the scientific-technological revolution threatened the socialist primacy of politics and ideology. The SED faced the task of bringing about the scientific-technological revolution while retaining the "advantages of socialism." The new political course required that technology and natural science be freed of Stalinist dogma, since effective planning was virtually impossible without at least partially releasing the social sciences from dogmatic principles. Marxist-Leninist domination of individual disciplines became problematic, especially since these disciplines could now challenge the dominant ideology's claim to provide an interpretation of society. In view of the SED's proclaimed goal of catching up with and surpassing West Germany, and learning from the West, the scientific-technological revolution needed to launch a distinctively anti-Western project. The Party solved its dilemma primarily by retaining socialist property relations, while using its ideological

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domination to enforce conformity to its socialist ethics and way of life. However, towards the end of the 1960s the Party adopted a new, independent position. Socialism was now described as a "relatively autonomous socio-economic formation," which allowed those "capitalist" instruments and methods integral to the reforms (the relation of commodities to money, profit and prices) to be considered part of a "political economy of socialism," thus also emphasizing divergences from the capitalist economy. Moreover, the socialist formation that, according to Ulbricht, had already been developed in East Germany was described according to systems theory: the "economic system" was held to be the core of the "developed social system of socialism." The ensemble of theoretical innovations was meant to provide time for the implementation of the reforms and to posit socialism as a social formation *sui generis*. The communist utopia, not realizable in the immediate future, was replaced by the "socialist human community," which seemed capable of harmoniously encompassing the increasing social differentiation and diverging interests precipitated by the reforms.

By the end of the 1960s, the SED and the society it had shaped exhibited a strange mixture of conformity and autonomy. The Party's implementation of the scientific-technological revolution resulted in conformity. But because of its dedication, the Party assumed a leading position within the bloc. This independence could only be maintained so long as the SED did not recede to the political sidelines. This was precisely the danger when reform communism appeared, particularly in Prague, and with the tentative rapprochement of Eastern and Western Europe. Ulbricht's opposition to détente failed miserably, particularly his efforts to make West Germany's formal recognition of East Germany a precondition for the resumption of relations between the two German states. Thanks to the military intervention in Prague, Eastern Europe remained untouched by the specter of reform communism. Ulbricht's distinctly anti-Western reform strategy, however, did not find support within the bloc. The SED's innovations were objectionable to the Soviets on theoretical grounds. The concept of socialism as a relatively autonomous social formation raised the question of how it was still possible to conceive of, or bring about the evolutionary transition to communism. Moreover, the primacy of politics and the leading role of the Party could not be readily explained in a systems-theoretical, self-regulatory notion of socialism. Finally, in East Germany the reforms led to a less theoretical but very concrete crisis. The emphasis on structurally important economic areas caused traditional industries to lag behind. This imbalance led to disruptions and serious shortages. The SED could not afford a

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social crisis, especially considering the unrest in Poland and the Party's difficult international position in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The SED officially reversed its reforms and its deviant theoretical development at its 8th Party Congress in 1971. The Party henceforth adhered to the guidelines set by the 24th Soviet Party Congress and to the bloc-wide denunciation of the Prague Spring. The socialist and communist phases of development were now said to share the following traits: socialized property, freedom from exploitation and class antagonism, planned administration of the economy and society, and the pre-eminence of Marxism-Leninism. Socialism itself was subdivided into two stages: first the building of a "mature socialist society" and second its achievement. The Soviet Union was regarded as an example of the second stage, while other socialist countries were examples of the first. The scientific-technological revolution remained the unquestioned objective. Yet, although businesses and factories remained relatively autonomous, the system of planning and administration was recentralized and the pace of reform slowed down.

The concept of the "mature socialist society" pushed the communist utopia into the distant future; the discrediting of the notion of the socialist human community exposed the antagonisms within "really existing socialism." The long-term strategy the SED developed at its 8th Party Congress took this situation into account insofar as it was aimed at creating a "unity of economic and social policy." The SED attempted thereby to continue its integral, future-oriented politics of social change, while at the same time finding solutions to contemporary problems. The social policy thus contained decidedly traditional elements.[2]

Erich Honecker underscored the unmistakably socialist character of the SED's pragmatic, present-day politics by ideologically reintegrating East Germany into the socialist camp and insisting on cooperation within this camp on political and economic issues, and by reasserting the primacy of Marxism-Leninism over individual academic disciplines.

2. The "unity of economic and social policy" has been the SED's most significant feature since the early 1970s. It is an attempt to coordinate economic growth, the scientific-technological revolution and social progress in order to accelerate the development of a "mature socialist society." The Party's economic strategy was primary, yet the social policy was central for implementing the economic strategy into what was understood not as a compensatory social safety net but as part of social change. This *de facto* social policy consisted of housing programs, social security systems and various consumer subsidies. In the last few years, there have been more and more voices, especially in the social sciences, advocating the introduction of achievement-oriented stratification to release "driving forces" to strengthen the economy. These advocates have not been very successful, since social guarantees have been the basis of political stability and loyalty.

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Finally, the Party stressed the socialist character of the social and political order by arguing that East Germany had developed into a mature "socialist German nation." This move was dictated by the politics of rapprochement between the two German states, which demanded a sharper differentiation from West Germany.

"East German Socialism"

During the Honecker era, the SED achieved as much as it could within the confines of its technocratic pragmatism and ideological tenets. The limits of its combination of independence and conformity became apparent in the late 1980s as the economy began showing signs of crisis. Shortages were worsening, the old, rigid system of central planning was stifling innovation, and the egalitarian system of social security was economically irrational in that it absorbed enormous financial resources while inhibiting productive incentives.

Even more threatening for the SED were political developments spreading from the Soviet Union into other socialist countries. In posing an increasing threat to the unity of the socialist bloc, the reform processes and accompanying political and ideological diversification endangered the SED's distinctively socialist project and, with it, as the Party feared, East Germany's existence as a separate state. Thus, it was impossible for the SED to interpret the return to pluralism in Eastern Europe as a chance for "emancipation through Soviet decline."[3]

It is questionable, however, whether *glasnost* and *perestroika* threatened the state's existence or only the Party's power. In order to hold on to power until 1989, the SED kept its society immune to reforms by maintaining a "careful division between the two social systems and military alliances." The border between the two German states necessitated a "politically stable course."[4] At the same time, the SED acknowledged that there was no longer a universally binding model of socialism and that there were "a variety of forms and paths toward the creation of a socialist society" which could be deployed "according to each country's specific needs." For the SED, "East German Socialism"[5] combined "continuity and renewal."[6] The word "renewal," however, remained hollow. The

3. Timothy Garton Ash, "The Fall of the Soviet Empire" in *Lettre International* (German Edition) (Winter 1988), p. 18.

4. Kurt Hager, *Neues Deutschland* (October 28, 1987), p. 4.

5. Erich Honecker at the 7th Plenum of the Central Committee, reported in *Neues Deutschland* (December 2, 1988), p. 3.

6. Manfred Banaschak, "Kontinuität und Erneuerung auf unserem Weg" in *Einheit*, no. 4 (1989), pp. 335ff.

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SED was still committed to "true" socialism: socialist property relations, central planning and especially the leading role of the Party.[7]

On the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the founding of the KPD (Communist Party of Germany) in 1988, the SED published a version of its Party's history that was meant to historically legitimate its present political course while warning its potential critics. According to this depiction, the groundwork for "East German Socialism" had already been laid in the days of Ernst Thälmann. The KPD was portrayed as having fought victoriously from its inception and against tremendous odds for the socialist structures established in East Germany.[8] To the same extent that this depiction sought to establish a continuity in the Party's actions, it also denounced the "counter-revolutionary pipe dreams" of those who would change the historically established *status quo* or dispute this version of history. In accusing "anti-Soviet" elements of "falsifying history" by portraying the history of the working class and the CPSU as a "series of mistakes," the Party employed the same tactics it had used in the 1950s to ward off "discussing errors."[9] At the same time, while cautioning the CPSU not to push its criticism of Stalinism too far, the SED attempted to detach its own history from Stalinism. In the position paper on the history of the KPD and the SED, neither Stalin nor the "personality cult" were mentioned. Outside the position paper, Ulbricht was quoted to the effect that there had never been a "personality cult" nor "mass repression" in East Germany.

The SED continued its policy of a "coalition of reason and realism," which had been the cornerstone of its foreign policy since 1983. This policy was well received by the public, and was praised as a sign of a "new way of thinking"[10] even before the Soviet Union had discovered *perestroika*. The SED's policies towards the West German SPD also served to enhance its reputation. The SED and the SPD collaborated on a paper entitled "Conflicting Ideologies and Common Security,"[11] which they

7. For further reading on the SED's resistance to change and the minimal adjustments made to official Party policies prior to Fall 1988, see Walter Süß, "East Germany's Defensive Politics" in *Telos* 79 (Spring 1989), pp. 163-80.

8. "70 Jahre Kampf für Sozialismus und Frieden, für das Wohl des Volkes. Thesen des ZK der SED zum 70. Jahrestag der Gründung der KPD" in *Einheit*, no. 7 (1988), pp. 586ff.

9. Ernst Diehl, *Die Geschichte unserer Partei gibt Kraft und Optimismus. Aus den Diskussionsreden (6. ZK-Plenum)* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1988), pp. 77f.

10. Eberhard Schulz "Das 'neue politische Denken' und die Deutschen" in *Deutschland Archiv*, no. 9 (1988), pp. 963ff.

11. Documented in *Deutschland Archiv*, no.1 (1988), pp. 86ff.

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signed in summer 1987. However, its content was open to interpretation. To summarize its main points, both systems were considered peaceful and capable of reform; each would accept criticism from the other without viewing this as interference in domestic affairs; and the advantages and disadvantages of the two systems should be discussed openly in each country. These ideas were unacceptable to many SED members who were unwilling to see their dogmatic interpretation of imperialism and social democracy revised. Kurt Hager, one of the Party's leading ideologues, provided these hard-liners with a working interpretation of the paper when he re-established the "foreign enemy" notion by stating that one would first have to make imperialism capable of peace.[12] Others warned that the dialogue between the two parties would leave no room for "ideological coexistence." Yet they conceded that an ideological conflict in the nuclear age needed to be resolved so as not to endanger peace. Socialists, however, would have to be "constantly vigilant."[13] Otto Reinhold, who co-authored the SED-SPD paper, explained it as a set of guidelines, not only for relations between the two parties, but also for the relation between communists and the rest of the world, thus contributing to the establishment of a "common European house."[14]

The Party's internal differences were temporarily settled as long as the paper could be interpreted in ways pleasing to hard-liners and reform-minded members alike. Yet the paper inevitably caused the SED to lose credibility because of its persistent intolerance of criticism. Domestic criticism was not permitted in any case, and criticism from abroad was still viewed as unwarranted interference in internal affairs. The SPD was informed that it could not expect East Germany to pattern itself after the West and that it would have to learn to respect the differences between the values and legal systems of the two parties.[15] After being criticized for its suppression of the ecology, peace and human rights movements, the Party only retrenched behind its dogmatic stand and declared its "unshakeable and irreconcilable opposition to its enemies."[16]

"East German Socialism" was estranging the Party leadership from its

12. Hager, *op. cit.*

13. Werner Felfe, *Alles zum Wohle des Volkes der DDR (5. ZK-Plenum Dez. 1987)* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1987), pp. 34f.

14. Otto Reinhold, *Neues Deutschland* (November 11, 1987), p. 3. Reinhold also mentions Honecker's intention to form a non-partisan political alliance for peace. See Manfred Banaschak and Otto Reinhold, "Der Streit der Ideologien und die Gemeinsame Sicherheit," in *Einheit*, no. 9 (1987), p. 777.

15. Kurt Hager at the 6th Plenum of the Central Committee, reported in *Neues Deutschland* (June 10, 1988), p. 3.

16. Diehl, *op.cit.*, p. 79.

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hard-liners as well as from its own reformers well before summer 1989. The situation was ambivalent in academic circles. Intellectual discourse had been relatively free of restraints for some time. The SED expected intellectuals to suggest ways of realizing the "renewal" of socialism without disturbing the basic socio-political order. The ensuing discussion, to the extent that it can be followed in the literature, remained within officially designated boundaries, and few intellectuals dared to publicly transgress them. Artists and writers proved to be more courageous in that they at least demanded *glasnost*. Ultimately, the most radical demands for reform came from countless small groups involved in movements for social change, and from factions of the Protestant church. In addition to calling for freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, freedom of movement, legal guarantees, and clearly defined restraints on governmental authority, these groups combined the demand for an education in autonomy and tolerance with a call on citizens to give up their passive "spectator mentality" and assume an active role in society.[17]

Yet these local dissident elements in civil rights groups, the church, and among writers and intellectuals were unable to coalesce into a larger movement. Establishment intellectuals and artists, and certainly Party members, distrusted these marginalized social movements especially since they rarely left the protection of the church. Consequently, pressure for reform remained isolated. The intelligentsia was apparently unable to rid itself of an abiding distrust of the people and of suspected opponents of socialism. Still convinced that East Germany, despite all its faults, was the "better" German state, intellectuals continued to see the SED as their partner in the reform process and cautiously urged it to support change. In short, the prevailing political climate in East Germany was still determined by traditional patterns. A reluctance to engage in public political action was coupled with excessive (albeit critical) loyalty to the authorities and trust in their insight and willingness to change.

Transformation through Rebellion

While the Party rhetorically supported "renewal," in practice it failed to institute any reforms. This resulted in mass emigration and democratic revolution — developments which forged a coalition between the critical intelligentsia, the internal Party opposition and social protest groups.[18]

17. Cf. Süß, *op. cit.*

18. The coalition between the established intelligentsia, the Party opposition and the new social movements formed between September and November 1989. The steps toward this consolidation included the resolutions of writers' and artists' organizations, of

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The SED leadership's early 1989 reform program posed such a risk to the existence of East Germany that the critical actors could not expect its actual implementation.[19] It should not be overlooked that the artistic and scientific intelligentsia, or at least its more famous representatives, never went so far as to participate in the new social movements, the citizens' initiatives or the newly emerging parties. As soon as the mass demonstrations and assemblies had lost their democratic socialist tenor, Christa Wolf, Stefan Heym and others made a last dramatic call to save East Germany and its socialist values.[20] Subsequently, they turned in disappointment from a society which had defected — in some cases physically, in others mentally — to the West German enemy.[21] At the same time, the revolution separated itself from its vanguard, from the spokespersons of its opposition groups. Before autumn 1989 the civil and human rights groups as well as the ecology and peace movements were small and marginal. They grew quickly in the wake of the revolutionary movement, but the increase in membership and the programmatic debates changed their character. In the beginning these groups were dominated by intellectuals of the younger generation no longer committed to the anti-fascist apology for Stalinism, who attempted to combine socialism with democracy and ecology and to establish contacts with other East European dissident groups. Today these early leaders have become a minority. Their organizations have become dominated by a middle class which now identifies freedom and democracy with a market economy and a

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colleges and universities in September; collective meetings and demonstrations beginning in October; and the mass demonstration including all these groups on November 4 in East Berlin.

19. The "Dialectic of Continuity and Renewal," which the SED announced would require social stability and the continued belief in its legitimacy. All these preconditions disappeared in the course of the year. The direct impetus for the rapid collapse came from outside: While free elections were introduced in Poland, the East German local elections of May, 1989, took place according to the old model and the results were blatantly falsified. While Party power was disintegrating in Poland and Hungary, the leaders of the SED applauded the massacre at Tiananemen Square. While Hungary opened its borders, Honecker declared that the Berlin Wall would stand for another 100 years.

20. The call "For Our Country," signed on November 26, cried out against the "sellout of our material and moral values" and for the preservation of "anti-fascist and humanist ideals." Cf. *Tageszeitung* (November 29, 1989). Günter de Bruyn criticized the pathetic tone of the appeal. He was particularly disturbed that it reinforced the image of the "enemy" as a "finance hyena." Cf. *Tagesspiegel* (December 2, 1989)

21. The writers' call also insinuated that the emigrants only wanted a higher rate of consumption. Monika Maron criticized her writer colleagues for appealing to values and ideals which they themselves did not practice and to which the state they wanted to preserve had only paid lip service. At the same time, the intellectuals expected the population to now finally realize "true" socialism. Cf. *Tageszeitung* (February 6, 1990).

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multi-party system. Socialism has become a term of provocation, and its supporters have become objects of public wrath.[22]

Since winter 1987-88, emigration has determined the nature of the opposition in East Germany. Those who sought official permission to emigrate to West Germany joined opposition groups and meetings in order to provoke the authorities. This situation forced those in the opposition who wanted to stay and change social conditions to more precisely define their ideas. The dramatic intensification of the political situation from summer through winter 1989 made it both easier and more difficult to realize reform possibilities. The mass emigration threatened to erode economic and social structures. Since the Party refused to recognize these developments, society was pressured to come to terms with the community's concerns. The democratic revolution in the autumn destroyed the Party structures of the old order, but could not halt emigration. The impulse to replace the old structures with new ones through democratic self-determination was blocked in two ways: first, the opposition's original reform proposals have become obsolete; second, most of society has shunned the experiment in self-determination and seeks annexation to West Germany.

Chanting "We are the people" and "We will stay here" in October and November 1989, the demonstrators made clear their demand to realize a people's sovereignty. It seemed as if they were going to turn East Germany (the German Democratic Republic) into precisely what its name suggests — a *democratic* republic. Many of the actors were convinced that the East German people had laid the groundwork for an enduring, independent, democratic statehood restructured from below. This optimistic assessment underestimated the long term effect of 40 years of compliance and did not consider the possibility that the West German government could refuse to stabilize the revolution in East Germany through offers of cooperation.[23]

The revolution hit the SED and state institutions with incredible force. It began October 2, 1989 in Leipzig. The prayer for peace, which had taken place every Monday evening for years in the St. Nicholas Cathedral, on this evening turned into the first spontaneous mass demonstration

22. Friedrich Schorlemmer (a co-founder of the opposition group "Democratic Awakening") explained the decline of grass roots elements and the contraction of the social program to the rush of the petty bourgeois and middle classes. Cf. *Tageszeitung* (February 9, 1990).

23. In November, Joschka Fischer (the Green's party whip in Frankfurt) still assumed that even the Christian Democrats would not consider economically destabilizing East Germany to the point that its collapse could only lead to reunification.

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since the beginning of the Workers' Revolt on June 16, 1953. On October 7, as the SED celebrated the fortieth anniversary of East Germany, the demonstrations spread to all large cities. The brutal police attacks, which until then had only been experienced on Western television, functioned like a shock. The state's reaction reinforced the willingness to protest. On October 11, the Politburo held out the prospect of changes to be implemented by the Party, including, most importantly, a relaxation of censorship in the mass media. A first trace of *glasnost* could be felt in the country. The wave of criticism and demands for political reform from mass demostrations which had grown to several hundred thousand led on October 18 to the dismissal of Erich Honecker from all his posts. His successor, Egon Krenz, laid out the technocratic terms of a reform to be led by the SED.[24] His election to head of state, despite abstentions and opposition votes in the Peoples' Congress, drove the people once again onto the public squares. They no longer recognized the legitimacy of the parliament and demanded free elections with an end to Party domination and with the participation of the New Forum and other opposition groups.[25] From then on the SED was at the mercy of the revolution. A wave of dismissals and resignations, also of suicides, gripped the mass organizations and also the four parties which had been allied with the SED in a "democratic block" for more than 40 years. The erosion of the old order penetrated all levels of the bureaucratic hierarchy. The first climax was reached with the resignation of the government and the politburo on November 7 and 8. Hans Modrow, who was held to be a reformer and, in contrast to Krenz, had not belonged to any high level Party committees, announced a constitutional state, legal rights secured by the constitution, new travel and emigration regulations, economic reform, free and secret elections and a "contractual community" with West Germany.[26] With the opening of the border on November 9, the flood of refugees through Prague and Budapest was stopped.[27] The falling of the

24. From Krenz's inaugural address as general secretary, in *Neues Deutschland* (October 19, 1989).

25. As head of state Krenz made more concessions than a week earlier at his election to the post of General Secretary. Cf. his speech in *Neues Deutschland* (October 25, 1989). This did not increase his acceptance by the population. On the contrary, he was regarded as a "turncoat" opportunist.

26. Cf. Hans Modrow's government statement in *Neues Deutschland* (October 18 and 19, 1989). The statement concretized the steps toward reform Krenz had announced and the old central committee of the SED had sketched out in a new program of action. Cf. *Neues Deutschland* (November 11 and 12, 1989).

27. In the first week of November alone roughly 37,000 East German citizens had made it through Czechoslovakia to West Germany.

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wall made the "turning point" — as the revolution was officially called — irreversible. A short time later the SED formally renounced its leading role in state and society. On December 1, the Peoples' Congress struck down the corresponding article of the constitution.

The revolution was victorious, but the victors were not aware of it. A phase of decline, not of self-consciousness, followed. Continuing revelations about the misuse of power and corruption, the arrest of high-level Party functionaries, and above all the unhindered further work of the State Security Service, not only increased mistrust but stirred up rage. "Reds out" became the new catch-phrase. The hatred of the SED assumed pogrom proportions. The Party faced a no-win situation. Its constituency forced the resignation of the entire leadership and the calling of an emergency Party Congress.[28] From then on the SED has been on the path to becoming the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS). But the reformers, who had desired a split in the Party, left the PDS. The reform-minded Party leadership centered around Gregor Gysi face a comparatively orthodox and nervous constituency. The argument against disbanding the PDS is that such a step would completely demoralize the members of the state apparatus and accelerate the collapse of East Germany. The counter-argument is that the continuation of the PDS will demoralize the rest of the society. Both arguments are valid, making clear that the society has not been able to develop internally the power to reorganize itself.

When the "round table" in East Berlin and other East German cities first convened at the beginning of December, the democratic revolution had already passed its peak. After the old ruling structures collapsed, cooperation among the political groups and parties could only be organized over the round table. It was hardly an accident that precisely the SED — still experienced in wielding power — pressed for the round table's institutionalization, and that the churches, the only recognized authority, assumed the position of moderator. Political organizations were primarily occupied with themselves. The four block parties gradually broke ties to the SED in a panic maneuver, realizing all the while the lack of credibility of their sudden transformation. The opposition groups,

28. Krenz at first stuck to the date for the Party Congress planned for May, 1990. Under pressure from the Party's constituency, he agreed to call a Party conference (with limited powers) for December. Finally, an emergency Party Congress (with full powers) was held on December 8, 15, and 16. This Party Congress changed the structure of the SED and outlined the perspective of a democratic socialist "third way." The Party's name was changed to the SED-PDS, and a split was rejected. Cf. *Neues Deutschland* (December 9-17, 1989).

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originally local and grassroots, still had to establish and consolidate themselves.[29] A process of programmatic and personal differentiation and self-definition began which remains unfinished and has prevented the opposition from considering the question of political power. Along with the old political forces, the opposition perceived the round table as a control organ for the government and as a precursor to a constituent assembly. A "great coalition of reason"[30] came into being which could no longer be certain which part of the population it even represented.

Since the second half of November, most demonstrators have begun to focus on the German nation. The banners and chants which gradually won the upper hand no longer announced "We are *the* people," but rather "We are *one* people." Where did this emphatic call for a "united German fatherland"[31] come from? The reasons and motivations are extremely complex. The unrestrained and spontaneous joy that broke out on both sides with the opening of the border doubtlessly strengthened the feeling of togetherness — even if in West Germany the patriotic euphoria has long since sobered into a wary resistance.[32] The sudden possibility of travel to West Germany presented East Germans with the prospect of prosperity they knew from television, but whose scale they could only now appreciate. They also felt themselves "deceived" by the Party whose domination they had accepted for decades and in which they had even in part participated. The revelations about corruption (which in fact were not so startling) and the arrest of members of the old elite contributed to repressing the fact that there were not just culprits and victims. All those who now quickly stylized themselves as victims secretly became "proper Germans," seeking to be annexed by the successful part of their co-nationals west of the Elbe. The trials now being planned will

29. Beginning with the New Forum in early November, the opposition groups have been legalized by the Ministry of the Interior. Without entering into a discussion of all the groups and parties, it can be said that their founders, with the exception of the newly created middle class parties, came primarily out of the counterculture and church contexts, had no political experience and were not ready to take on political responsibilities. Many members of the civil rights movements did not feel that these movements should enter the government or parliament, but should remain at grassroots.

30. Matthias Geis, *Tageszeitung* (December 12, 1989).

31. The public mood changed in Leipzig first. In the East German south and its industrial centers the cry for German unity is ever stronger since economic and ecological problems are most pressing.

32. The flood of East German immigrants is causing dissatisfaction due to the overloading of the job and housing markets and the social welfare systems. Oskar Lafontaine's success in the elections in the Saarland at the end of January, 1990 was due in part to his thematization of these problems.

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result less in the bringing of those responsible to justice than in absolving the majority of the population from responsibility and inserting them into the national community of all Germans. The slogan "We are one people" also expresses hopelessness: the economic infrastructure is antiquated and the social infrastructure is deteriorating because hundreds of thousands have already left the country and are turning to emigration. Following the collapse of the old order, a society remains which, as the West German government and its parties suggested, has only one alternative: German unity.

When East Germany opened its border to the West, the parliament in Bonn rose and sang the German national anthem. While the SPD demanded that the federal goverment consult with the opposition parties on the German situation, Helmut Kohl had already realized that elections would be on the agenda for both German states in 1990 and that these elections would decide political hegemony in Germany. As it seems, "Adenauer's grandson" would like to bring about unification based on the West German constitution and under the dominance of the Christian Democratic Party. The chancellor's 10 Point Plan was a reaction to Hans Modrow's suggestion of a "contractual community" between two sovereign German states. Modrow understood his plan as a "worthy example of cooperative coexistence," which was supposed to build upon and extend the 1972 Basic Treaty and subsequent treaties between the two Germanys. He knew that East Germany would be dependent on West German cooperation; but he suggested placing that cooperation in the context of "the common European house."[33] Kohl declared himself ready to "go a decisive step further": to a confederation of both states and to a federated state system.[34] This idea conceived of a long time frame with plenty of room for European influence within the context of the common "house."

The postwar period is coming to an end — that is no original discovery. The question is when and how Yalta will be overcome. Will the Germans further Europeanize themselves or will they instead Germanize Europe? This question, which Pierre Hassner asked a few years ago, is now more relevant than ever because the priorities — first European,

33. Cf. Modrow's government statement in *Neues Deutschland* (November 18 and 19, 1989).

34. Concerning Kohl's 10 Point Plan for German Unification of November 28, 1989, cf. *Deutschland Archiv*, vol. 23, no.1 (1990), pp. 149ff.

35. Concerning the statement on German unification developed by the SPD party convention in Berlin on December 18-20, 1989, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 152ff.

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then German, unity — have been shifted due to developments in East Germany and Bonn's reactions to them. A far-sighted man once said that if the Germans want unity, no one can stop them. This statement seems to be coming true. At the very least a confederation seems inevitable. Since the Soviet Union has given its basic assent, Modrow has tried to apply the emergency brakes with the demand for German neutrality.[36] East Germany needs time, as do other European countries. But the West German government is accelerating the tempo by disconcerting the East German population with ever new visions of horror concerning its domestic prospects and by systematically demolishing its government.[37] Bonn's tendency to dictate the conditions of unity to East Germany does not lead one to expect that a unified Germany in Europe will enter the scene with caution. If the previously socialist countries will not be given the chance to function as politically equal partners, the line dividing Europe cannot be assured. Economic exploitation and nationalist revolts would be the result, and the societies east of the Oder would again be the losers "of history."[38]

Postscript

On March 18, 1990, a majority of the East German citizenry voted for the quick unification of Germany promised by the "Alliance for Germany." This vote was not only motivated by German nationalism. It expressed above all the hope for a speedy improvement of the economic situation. Even if this hope should turn out to be an illusion, the Alliance's election victory signals the East German desire for a radical political and economic transformation. East Germany is to approach the West

36. The Modrow plan "For a United German Fatherland" resembles in many respects the plans set forth by the CDU/CSU and the SPD. It distinguishes itself through its demand for German neutrality and the extensive time span for the unification process the West German parties had already decided to shorten. While the phrase "united fatherland" represents a concession to the prevailing mood in East Germany, the other aspects of the plan express the desire to retard the unification process.

37. The February meeting between Modrow and Kohl provides the most stunning example. Cf. The critical commentary by Robert Leicht in *Die Zeit* (February 16, 1990).

38. The East German opposition now realizes that the victor in the Bonn elections will be the one who "conquers East Germany." Quoted from Wolfgang Ullmann (minister of the citizens' movement "Democracy Now") in an interview in the *Tageszeitung* (February 12, 1990). In businesses and unions there is a fear of closures and mass layoffs. The unrest has also been intensified by the fact that West German citizens and businesses have begun to register old property claims in East Germany. Bonn's announcement of the need to immediately integrate East Germany's currency (the East German opposition speaks ironically of the "invasion" of the Deutsche Mark) has led to a "run" on savings accounts. It is questionable whether the developing fear will translate into politics.

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German model, signifying democratization and the willingness both to engage in the factional struggles of citizens and to confront the vagaries of the market. Of course, the necessary expertise hardly exists in East Germany, and the the desire for quick unification consequently reflects the old political immaturity. Subordination to the Party-state makes way for a subordination to directives from Bonn. What "socialism" failed to provide is now to be provided by the "nation."

The East German election results demonstrate the divided condition of society. While some have placed their hopes on unification, others retain a fear of "capitalism." The fear that a quick integration of the currency and the economy will lead to the collapse of many East German businesses and to massive unemployment is thoroughly justified. Social welfare systems are completely undeveloped, and mass poverty is a real danger. Yet the reservations about the Alliance's program also demonstrate the lasting impact of SED propaganda. "Socialism" is still considered the final bastion for the rationality of state ownership and planning, the protector against social disintegration, and the guarantor of human values. The SPD, civil rights groups and parties which brought about the democratic revolution were unsuccessful in attempting to push through either an alternative program or a program that could mediate the two poles. They were the real losers in the elections.

According to the first election analyses, the working classes in the South (which contains the industrial centers) voted for the Alliance, along with the petty bourgeoisie and the middle classes. From an historical perspective, the SPD's defeat was due to the failure of the traditional social democratic voting regions — Thuringia and Saxony — to remain undamaged by totalitarian socialism. The parties of the Left and the civil rights movements gained most of their support from the North, the cities, the service and administrative sectors, and the intelligentsia.

The surprising success of the East German CDU within the Alliance camp is matched by the strength of the PDS. Both parties stand in their own way for the *ancien regime*. Until the revolution, the East German CDU was the most subservient of the Communist bloc parties. Any concessions to Christian values that the SED was forced to make during its rule were brought about not by the East German CDU but by the churches. Both parties can indeed claim to have gone through a transformation process *after* the revolution. This process is not yet complete, and could not have possibly been completed in such a short time. Why do they nevertheless enjoy so much trust? The East German CDU participates in Kohl's popularity and that of the West German government.

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On the other hand, the false belief (nurtured for years by the SED) that the conservatives are the "agents of capital" and that the supporters of the Alliance merely desire capitalist investment has not yet been broken. The PDS supporters illustrate the other side of the ideological coin by holding on to the "better," anti-capitalist Germany and to a conception of democracy which gives priority to state organization over individual civil engagement.

The marginalization of the democratic-revolutionary actors is not surprising, it has been evident for a long time. It is not only due to the fact that the civil rights leaders — as good German Protestants — preached asceticism in the name of ecology, the third world, and individual self-realization. Their plea for participatory democracy and political self-determination was simply unconvincing for a large part of society. Everyday material concerns were too overwhelming, and a radical concept of political freedom hardly expresses, even under favorable socio-economic conditions, the desires of a social majority. The revolution in East Germany has nevertheless opened up a chance — no more, but also no less — for a democratic development.

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Israel and South Africa: Conflict Resolution in Ethnic States

Heribert Adam

The pictures are strikingly similar: stone-throwing, street barricades, army reprisals, consumer boycotts, school closures, press censorship, permanent emergencies. Perceptive friends of Israel warn that turning Israel into another South Africa will be a moral victory for the Palestinians. Continued control over the West Bank and Gaza, writes Shlomo Avineri, "means continued oppression of a million-and-a-half Palestinians and a slow 'South Africanization' of Israel."[1] Other academics point to the obvious resentment of such analogies: "Most Israelis exhibit a profound reluctance to come to terms with the substance and ramifications of the comparison between themselves and white South Africa."[2] Yet the chairman of the Israeli League for Human and Civil Rights, Israel Shahak bluntly states: "Conditions are actually, theoretically and officially worse than in South Africa."[3] On the other hand, South African whites like this comparison with Israel's chosen people, seeing themselves battling a larger enemy with divine protection.

Comparing the worst international pariah state to Israel deprives the Israeli regime of its moral legitimacy. Are we witnessing the final normalization of Israel, the destruction of a myth that Israel is special, due to the Jews' sensitivity to persecution and the Holocaust? Has Israel become just another oriental state, as ruthless in its expansionist drive and oblivious to minority rights as its Arab adversaries?

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1. *Jerusalem Post*, December 16, 1988.
2. Naomi Chazan, "Israel and South Africa: Some Preliminary Reflections," *New Outlook* (June 1988), pp. 8-11.
3. Israel Shahak, "Israeli Apartheid and the Intifada," *Race and Class*, vol. 30, no. 1 (1988), pp. 1-12.

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When Israel's international supporters lose faith in her uniqueness, the financial base of her existence is directly threatened. South Africa can afford to ignore international protest; Israel remains dependent on outside support. It receives 3 billion dollars annually from US sources alone. The frequent comparison between Israel and South Africa has become a weapon in today's ideological warfare. Ever since a United Nation's resolution equated Zionism with racism, the focus on the close economic and military collaboration of these two outcasts has also further obscured their structural differences. These divergent tendencies will be explored in this analysis, particularly in the neglected area of PLO and ANC resistance politics and developments in the subordinate populations. This analysis, then, uses the Israeli situation as a backdrop to reexamine South African developments rather than elaborating in detail on the much clearer Israeli trends and options.

Ethnic States and Strategies of Domination

The similarities between Israel and South Africa transcend the label "settler societies." Both are ethnic states. Unlike plural states with power-sharing arrangements between the different segments (whether real or professed), ethnic states define themselves as the domain of only one group. Israel is a self-defined Jewish state. South Africa excludes the majority of its citizens from the franchise for the central government. But whether ethnic outsiders are enfranchised, like the 700,000 Israeli Arabs, or treated as non-citizens, like the 1,600,000 Palestinians in the occupied territories, political and economic power rests with the dominant ethnic group.[4] It views the state as its sanctuary. At the same time, this refuge is used as a means for perpetuating power and privilege. From the symbolic politics of the national anthem, rituals and monuments, to the cabinet, boardrooms and the laws of the state, everything reflects only the values of the ruling ethnic group. The rest are treated as second-class citizens at best or as a serious threat to political hegemony at worst.

Under the Law of Return any Jew anywhere in the world is entitled to instant Israeli citizenship upon immigration, while many Palestinians born in Israel or the occupied territories are permanently exiled. The

4. For more discussion, see Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Pierre L. van den Berghe, *The Ethnic Phenomenon* (New York: Elsevier, 1981); Michael Banton, *Racial and Ethnic Competition* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); David L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); and John Rex and D. Mason, eds., *Theories of Race and Ethnic Relations* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

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Palestinian diaspora of 2,600,000 in the Arab states, like the Jewish diaspora of 9,000,000, exceeds the population in the homeland. Similarly, save temporary foreign migrant workers, only "whites" can immigrate to South Africa. Grand Apartheid also attempted to denationalize as Bantustan citizens as many of the 73% black South Africans as possible.

The ethnic states of Israel and South Africa are not colonies or "imperial outposts," although they have been widely denounced as illegitimate, alien regimes based on colonial conquest. The many features of colonial social relations notwithstanding, they lack the metropolitan homeland to which Afrikaners or Jews could return. This has long been recognized by the ANC opposition in South Africa as well as by the PLO with respect to the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish state. At the heart of the dispute is what kind of nation should be built in the area under control of the ethnic state.

Unlike Israel, which switched to more direct rule of the territories since 1981 in response to the PLO influence in the semi-autonomous local administration, South Africa's population ratios and limited white minority resources led to early indirect rule. The establishment of Bantustans imposed from above failed to get rid of blacks. By pressing blacks to police themselves and administer their own poverty in townships and Bantustans, Pretoria, however, deflected anger onto black clients. The zeal with which corrupt town councillors and other perceived "collaborators" are attacked reflects the resentment of those participating in their own domination. At the same time, indirect rule divides the population into bitterly opposed factions, unlike West Bank Palestinians, who are less ideologically fragmented. When the ANC asked black policemen to turn their guns on their white masters, nobody listened. The South African police still has more black applicants than it can recruit. When the leadership of the uprising demanded the resignation of Palestinian officials in the Israeli service, the majority obeyed instantly, although many trickled back. More than 90% of the politically conscious Arabs in the territories are said to support the PLO, even though it is only an umbrella organization of various factions. In South African townships, on the other hand, UDF/ANC, Inkatha, AZAPO/Black Consciousness or ideologically confused local vigilantes constantly vie for control in pitched battles.

To achieve such division has, of course, long been the intent of apartheid policies. Deliberate state projects, however, do not explain their comparative success. The ethnic heterogeneity of blacks on which the apartheid edifice is built, compared with the ethnically more homogeneous Palestinians, does not account for the violent clashes either. Most

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intra-black strife in South Africa occurs within the same ethnic group: the Pietermaritzburg killings grew out of political differences among Zulus, the Crossroads devastations were an all Xhosa affair, as were the UDF-AZAPO clashes in the Eastern Cape.

From the perspective of orthodox Marxist theory, the divisions in black South Africa are all the more astonishing, as urban blacks represent a relatively homogeneous proletariat, locked up in identical housing. The life chances of the ghetto dwellers are determined by common exclusion. In contrast, Palestinians outside the refugee camps constitute a much more stratified society. They comprise a large petty bourgeoisie of merchants, professionals and small-scale farmers. Until replaced by politicized youth of the recent Intifada, these minor middle-class notables have so far set the tone. The Palestinian workers are generally day commuters rather than permanent city dwellers or long-time migrants, as in South Africa. One would expect class divisions to express themselves much more explicitly in Palestinian society and, conversely, predict a much more common ideological stance in the South African case. The contrary empirical reality defies such crude reductionism.

What is neglected in these considerations is a number of factors that are unique to each situation. In South Africa, the very poverty created by minority rule has partly destroyed traditional African norms and values. An atomized existence in an alien township environment has replaced traditional family structures, undermined by decades of migrant work, legal insecurity and economic dependency. In this atmosphere of hopelessness, people turn on each other rather than against their hidden source of misery. The opponent appears too overwhelming to be attacked directly. Few can trace the exact causes of low wages or unemployment in the absence of suppressed political education. The illegality of political organization prevents vague frustrations from being collectively articulated. Instead, individualistic escape from a depressing reality frequently prevails. The widespread use of drugs or dream worlds built around independent churches (to which 30% of all blacks actively belong) testifies to a state of political anomie, reinforced daily by effective media manipulation favoring consumerism and apolitical individualism.

Every so often, semi-integrated youth break through that cycle of despair in periodic upheavals, but only to be taught with ever more sophisticated repression that they hope in vain. Law and order triumph, albeit in a permanent emergency. Compliance without consent is acceptable to a state that has long abandoned striving for legitimacy among its majority. The authorities do not need to be supported, only obeyed. Acquiescence, not identification, remains the hallmark of ethnic rule in an

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authoritarian system because, unlike fascist or Communist regimes, the South African state aims at creating depoliticized passivity rather than active involvement of its subject peoples. Thus it directs its coercion mainly against activists. Were it to practice collective punishments, such as curfews or indiscriminate beatings as in Israel, South Africa would deprive itself of its work force. Unlike Israel, where Arab labor so far is a significant factor only in construction and agriculture, no sector of the South African economy can do without black labor. In Israel only 7% of workers are Palestinians from the territories; in the South African economy, 70% of employees are black Africans.

General C.J. Lloyd, the Secretary of the South African State Security Council, has stressed that in "eliminating" the small number of ANC revolutionaries in the townships, the security forces must take care not to "incur the wrath of the masses" by harming uncommitted, non-revolutionary members of the community "by accident." In fact, the army deploys a far-reaching program of "upgrading" selected troublesome townships in the hope of pacifying the communities with material improvements, like better houses, roads and sewers. While some far-thinking Israelis fear their country is declining into another South Africa, some Afrikaners, ironically, warn about the opposite. "No right-minded person," said the rector of the University of Stellenbosch, Mike de Vries, in an address to the Military Academy, "wanted South Africa's situation to deteriorate to the level of Israel's, which had to stand against the Arab world." Afrikaans culture would become extinct without friends in Africa and "fearless contact with other races."[5] The South African rulers even encourage "self-criticism." In their sophisticated, selected repression the South Africans remain far ahead of the Israeli method of punishing everyone in an area of uprising in the hope of causing a backlash against activists. South Africa's minority cannot afford a climate of communal warfare that Israel's majority seems to tolerate quite comfortably.

In short, in South Africa the common economy constitutes one major limit to ruthless apartheid, reinforced by the full economic integration which modern production increasingly demands. These constraints are minimal in Israel. Despite its increased use of Palestinian labor, and contrary to the ideals of the early Zionists, Arab economic action can prick but not fatally wound the Israeli economy. A long general strike and consumer boycotts by blacks, however, could paralyze the apartheid state. It has not yet happened on a national scale because black workers themselves cannot afford this route and are also divided over strategy.

5. *Sunday Tribune*, January 24, 1988.

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Different Roles of Unions in Ethnic States

In South Africa, the most formidable challenge to the state comes from the union movement. Increasingly better organized unions restrain state policies and even trigger employers to defend workers rights occasionally in the interest of stability and productivity. In short, the South African labor movement operates outside state structures against capital and government alike. This adversarial relationship is regulated by some mutual adherence to mechanisms of dispute settlements, recognition agreements and labor laws which allow unions to operate legally within mutually recognized limits. This is true despite frequent repressive measures and conflicts over the labor laws.

In Israel, the powerful trade union federation Histadrut is an integral part of the Jewish establishment. It is much more than a union, due to the socialist origins of its cooperative industries. Histadrut is the second largest employer in Israel after the government, employing close to a quarter of the Israeli workforce. It owns the largest construction company (Solel Boneh), bus companies (Egged, Dan) and trading houses. Subsidiaries of the Histadrut owned multinational Koor Industries are involved in sophisticated weapons production and military electronics. Despite protest from within the federation, the Histradut construction company has built over one quarter of the Jewish settlements in the territories. Although the federation officially objects to the policy, it would not want to forego the lucrative contracts.

Histradut does not feel responsible to West Bank workers, even though legal contracts between the federation and employers cover all workers regardless of nationality. In practice this has led to a split labor market: Palestinians frequently earn less for the same work and are laid off first. Yet all workers from the territories who are recruited through government labor exchanges have an "organization tax" of 1% deducted from their wages which goes to Histadrut for "trade union protection." However, workers from the territories are not entitled to vote in union elections or local workers councils. Palestinians are barred from being members of cooperatives and are mainly employed as day laborers.

Histadrut resembles the para-statals in South Africa. Originally founded to enable Afrikaner economic advances with state backing in an English controlled economy, South African public sector corporations have nevertheless gradually included employees from other groups as well. So far Histadrut has resisted this ethnic dilution and remains committed to its Jewish origins. It is hostile to Palestinian unions, which are viewed as fronts of "terrorist organisations." With the Labor Party as its political mouthpiece, Israeli unions are now more intricately

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part of the ethnic state than their South African counterpart.

In South Africa, economic integration has led to a pattern of social interaction between ethnic opponents that is lacking in Israel. Blacks and whites work side by side everywhere. For example, most white households employ full-time black domestic help in South Africa. Few Jewish families could dream of such luxuries. The unequal but intimate master-servant relationship nonetheless establishes paternalistic bonds. On the whole, white South Africans do not hate blacks so much as they exploit them. Many Israelis despise Arabs and, above all, exclude them. The social distance between Arab and Israeli is far greater than between the South African races, despite a longer tradition of integration of institutions like hospitals or universities in Israel. For Golda Meir, Palestinians as a nation did not exist. For South African whites, blacks have their definite place in the feudal social hierarchy. They have to be controlled but cannot be wished away. In some sense, segregation was motivated not by a belief in black inferiority but by the threat of black numerical superiority. On the other hand, many Jews perceive Palestinians as the vanguard of an Arab threat. They are considered to be competing nationalists rather than an inferior race. Because Jews and Palestinians live in separate economies and subcultures, Jewish academics have less contact so far with Palestinian intellectuals than white and black professionals in formally segregated but economically integrated South Africa. Only Israel has an unenforceable law forbidding Israeli citizens contact with PLO office holders, although Pretoria once threatened to follow suit.

Costs of Ethnic Rule

There are obvious costs attached to continued ethnic rule by force. Apart from the loss of international legitimacy and its economic implications, two internal costs stand out: military discipline and emigration.

Use of the army against the civilian population in both South Africa and Israel has undermined military morale and cohesion. Conscientious objection among the conscripts has increased. Conceived as an instrument to unify and integrate heterogeneous adolescents, the military as a domestic occupation force inevitably produces internal dissent. A citizen army is not primarily trained to suppress unrest at home. If it is used in a permanent emergency against disgruntled civilians, the eventual brutalities and lawlessness of soldiers erode the very discipline and professionalism on which both the Israeli and South African army pride themselves. From an overarching non-partisan loyalty to a state, the military force fragments into sectarian partisanship.

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In this predicament, liberal groups like the Democratic Party in South Africa have pushed an entire professional army as their solution to unreliable conscripts and the moral qualms of pacifists. This option, however, is likely to increase the sectarian character of the army. Based on self-recruitment, a predominantly right-wing predilection among the professional soldiers could pose an even greater threat to societal pluralism than a strife-ridden band of ill-trained conscripts from all segments of the population. Unlike South Africa, the army leadership in Israel stands to the Left of the government and has always been sympathetic to the Labor Party. Besides, an ethnic state with a hostile population in its midst is forced to be a garrison state in which all male members of the dominant group are trained in the potential use of force.

Emigration figures indicate a growing alienation in both societies. Official statistics tell only part of the story because many leave as tourists or students without formally declaring their intent to live permanently abroad. Statistics also hide the quality of the emigrants who are disproportionately comprised of better educated professionals and wealthier inhabitants in both societies. While reasons for leaving vary, reluctance to be drafted and raise children in an uncertain environment can be cited with the materially better life abroad in both cases.

Israeli and South African policies also affect the nature of immigration. When Israel changed from a moral state — in Ben Gurion's vision, an example to the world — to an expansionist state under Begin, so did the composition of its immigrants. Instead of being an attractive homeland for the approximately 9,000,000 Jews in the diaspora, it increasingly appealed to religious zealots. Less than 10% of Jewish emigrants from the Soviet Union chose Israel once they arrived in the West. Since 1980, more people left than settled in Israel. A similar pattern can be observed for South Africa. Here the massive outflow of capital since 1985, despite official restrictions, has preceded a quiet but steady emigration of mainly English-speaking whites with options abroad. Emigration rises in times of unrest but declines when repression has restored stability.

The emigration/immigration patterns have obviously influenced the politics and voting behavior in favor of right-wing parties. While the influx of oriental Jews three decades ago and decline of European immigrants more recently has benefitted right-wing parties, the many Rhodesian whites who settled in South Africa are known to have strong leanings towards the Conservative Party. Immigrants from Europe into the apartheid state cannot come from Left parties. Instead, studies have

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shown them to overconform to local customs.[6] On the other side, South African voters for the liberal Democratic Party frequently hold British passports. The decline of the PFP since 1987 can be partly attributed to a disproportional emigration of its constituency.

Unlike Zionism, Afrikaner nationalism has no sympathetic diaspora. In many ways it remains its own diaspora. This deprives Afrikanerdom of the international resources and powerful lobbies at the disposal of Zionism. Apartheid policies have created a *hostile* diaspora of South African exiles. It is the exile activists who now push for sanctions. Embittered or guilty about leaving and enjoying the good life abroad, the further they are removed from the struggle the more they have to prove their commitment. This distance gives exile pronouncements a particularly harsh and uncompromising edge. In short, while Israel can rely on support or at least understanding among fellow ethnics in the West, most South African emigres either join the opposition or become apolitical.

US recognition of the PLO and its new pragmatism towards Israel, together with the orthodox debate on 'who is a Jew' has split the Jewish disaspora. As Leonard Fein (1988) has argued, the longstanding covenant of unconditional support of Israel by American Jews has been broken by the controversy.[7] It has affected fundamentally the relations of US Jews with Israel and with each other. Only 10% of American Jewry are Orthodox, while 30% would identify themselves as Reform Jews, 34% as Conservative Jews and 26% do not belong to any branch. Particularly those who were either converted by Reform or Conservative rabbis or are the children of such converts (approximately 500,000 in this category) feel that they have been relegated to second class status, although only a handful in this category would contemplate emigrating to Israel. It would be wrong to assume, however, that intra-Jewish controversies will fundamentally affect the basic support for Israel in its diaspora.

Responses to Ethnic Domination

There are obviously many factors which inspire a frustrated youth in both countries to seek political solutions in street battles. While blocked employment opportunities and specific grievances about the educational system or living conditions are critical, most underestimate how much increased formal education together with vastly increased media exposure have contributed to informed politicization.

The exclusiveness of the Israeli economy prevented the absorption of Palestinian high school and college graduates. The relative independence

6. John Stone, *Colonist or Uitlander? A Study of the British Immigrant in South Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973).

7. Leonard Fein, *Who Are We?* (New York: Harper, 1988).

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of the Palestinian educational system guaranteed a comparatively high turnout of educated youngsters who became the main organizers of the uprising. Neither adequate employment in an underindustrialized home economy nor emigration into the recession-ridden Gulf states was a viable option any longer for a politicized and alienated youth.

Compared with the closed Israeli system — where the Histadrut monopolizes the labor market in the interest of Jewish entrants and where non-Israeli Palestinians have access only to low paying, unskilled jobs — the South African economy still suffers from a skilled manpower shortage. Most private businesses, and to some extent also the state sector, are now ready to admit non-white graduates, provided they are well trained. In South Africa, the issue is no longer the ethnic exclusiveness of a white economy but the impoverishment of a dependent black educational system. Together with a disruptive township life, underfunded schools and ill-trained teachers, the frustrated products of Bantu education reacted with militancy similar to the Palestinians, despite greater objective employment opportunities for skilled blacks in South Africa.

As the South African government wavered between school closure and enforced instruction under police supervision, so the Israeli rulers found themselves in a similar dilemma after the West Bank pupils were sent home for lengthy periods. According to observers, "the Israeli Government did not realize that when the 277,000 West Bank school children were freed from the heavily controlled, politically sanitized school curriculum, many of them would instead attend free-form underground schools that ignored all the government's rules."[8] Two factors aided the attempts of alternative schooling, compared with the problems of "people's education" in South Africa: firstly, the relative independence of Palestinian teachers, paid by Jordan, did not intimidate teachers as much as in the authoritarian South African system; secondly, the relative cultural homogeneity, communal discipline and cohesion of Palestinian society facilitated alternative instruction, compared with the impoverished township life in South Africa. "People's education" in South Africa aimed at transforming the existing system rather than creating a separate one. Like the underground Intifada education, it politicized the youth through emphasis on political relevancy for the liberation struggle. But the Palestinian effort never demanded an integrated education system under a single ministry with equal expenditure and rights for all its participants as in South Africa.

The comparatively greater black poverty in South Africa also shaped

8. Joel Brinkley, "Hard Lessons from Arab Unrest," *New York Times* (May 22, 1988).

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the different economic warfare in both societies. Boycotts of white stores were based on an increased importance of black purchasing power. However, this weapon presupposed organization and alternative supplies which were not always available or frequently more expensive in townships. Limited strikes and rent boycotts proved more effective where production and local administration was dependent on black cooperation. In Israel's more self-sufficient Jewish economy, withholding taxes has been used by the Intifada to protest against taxation without representation. The Israeli response to tax strikes, such as in Beit Sahur, a wealthy predominantly Christian town east of Bethlehem, has been the confiscation of furniture, appliances, cars, tools and merchants' goods. In South Africa, such economic warfare would be difficult because most blacks are so poor that they pay little taxes. Where people did not pay service charges for water and electricity in the black townships, the local administration simply cut off supplies. Only the rent boycott proved partially successful, because not everyone could be evicted.

Television in particular has introduced comparative outrage among the victims of state violence. They no longer consider their fate in isolation from other world events. The *New York Times* reports: "As the Defense Minister toured Ramallah, an Arab resident protested to him: 'I saw them give beatings. In South Africa, they don't hit like that.' 'What do you know about South Africa?' demanded Mr. Rabin. 'We know,' the man replied. 'We see it on TV'."[9] Similarly, South African protests have been inspired, if not misled, by dreams about the imminent collapse of white rule, reinforced by anti-Pretoria rhetoric abroad. The world-wide hostility towards South Africa has encouraged false analogies with liberation elsewhere in Africa. At times, a subconscious myth has developed that freedom will be delivered from abroad by ANC fighters or invading armies or even Russian submarines landing on the Transkeian Wild Coast. All these false hopes have detracted from the task of realistic political organization inside the country.

It was the feeling of neglect by Arab states in light of Israeli collective punishment which led to the emergence of a new internal leadership among the Palestinians. The internal underground increasingly directs the PLO exiles who were caught by surprise, similar to the ANC not being prepared for the 1976 Soweto uprising. The events unified. Unexpectedly for Israel, the Israeli Arabs joined the strike action for the first time. Above all, a new internal secret National Committee emerged. It comprised representatives of all five factions: Arafat's El Fatah (the

9. *New York Times*, January 20, 1988.

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strongest), the three "socialist" organizations, aligned with different outside sponsors: the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Democratic Front, the Communist Party, and, finally, Islamic Jihad, the fundamentalists with much support in the camps.

It was the internal leadership that allowed the moderate faction in the PLO to formally recognize Israel. The Intifada had overtaken the exiles. Those under direct Israeli rule want to have their own independent state even though it will only amount to symbolic sovereignty and has to be bought at the expense of the dream to replace the Jewish state. The internal leadership now sets the tone of resistance politics. But the internal movement, both in the territories and in South Africa, views itself as one with its exiled arm. Therefore, in both cases there cannot be a settlement without the full recognition and participation of the PLO and the ANC.

Quite apart from the better image of the ANC, its international role is quite different from that of the PLO. Intense competition between the PLO's different Arab sponsors has exacerbated the factionalism among the exiled activists. PLO factions have to outbid each other and fall in line with the competing interests of Syria, Iraq, Libya, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Since the majority of Palestinians live in the diaspora under the tutelage of these states, any potential "solution" directly affects a much wider area. Despite the Arab rhetoric supporting the Palestinians, they are merely pawns in a wider game and generally resented by the populations of the Arab states. In contrast, the comparatively few South African exiles in the frontline states are genuinely supported in their cause, although the ANC is much poorer financially than the PLO. The ANC in exile has preserved a remarkable unity (in contrast to the internal opposition) partly because it was not dependent on competing sponsors.

There are also cleavages and tensions among South African exile movements.[10] But none of the conflicts has reached the stage of sizeable armies pitched against each other or of assassinations of rival leaders, as in the Palestinian case. Even traditional hostility between ANC and PAC supporters has waned with the dramatic ascendancy of the ANC as the most legitimate, though not exclusive mouthpiece of the South African majority. The belated acceptance of the PLO in a similar vein in the West, however, is always hedged by reservations about the various opposing Palestinian factions within and without the organization, making policy statements by Arafat far more ambiguous than those by Tambo.

10. Heribert Adam, "Exile and Resistance: The African National Congress, the South African Communist Party and the Pan Africanist Congress," in Peter Berger and Bobby Godsell, *A Future South Africa* (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1988).

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Ethnic Mobilization for Survival: Myth and Reality

Recognition of each other means that one of "the most severe motives in battle"[11] is missing: survival. There are survival rhetoric and security concerns among South African whites. But the white South Africans' anxieties are more concerned with affluence than physical survival. Whites fear a Third World encroaching on their First World privileges they are reluctant to share. The protest of the excluded is translated into security threats. Security for whites means a low crime rate, no riots and no bombings. So far, daily life of most whites has hardly been affected. Behind their fences and barred windows in exclusive suburbs, the good life continues, regardless of the permanent emergency.

In Israel, survival has an existential quality. It concerns foremost the collectivity, not the individual. After four wars against the Jewish state, the "total onslaught" is real, not an invention of state propaganda. 16,000 Israelis have been killed in a series of interstate wars as opposed to a few hundred whites in their government's capricious adventure in Angola. Amidst hostile neighbors with powerful armies, the genuine threat to the 3,600,000 Israeli Jews does not compare with the hostile rhetoric of dependent frontline states in Southern Africa. If contemporary Afrikaner collective memory has been traumatized by past battles and defeats, it was more by the "Boer War" against the British and not the repeated clashes with "natives." However, the atrocities of the British against the civilian population during the Boer war cannot be equated with the systematic genocide against Jews. British "concentration camps" with starving Boer women and children do not resemble the Holocaust. Unlike Jews, Afrikaners are not a people haunted by pogroms in a global diaspora. The history of persecution of Jews gives the survival of the Israeli sanctuary its special legitimacy. In short, the moral motive of survival has greater credibility in Israel than in South Africa, where potential equal co-existence is not an issue. On the other hand, a highly militarized Israel has little to fear from a likely demilitarized, small Palestinian state. Its major threat to Israel would not be as a military vanguard of divided Arab states. In reality, Israeli planners fear the influence of a successful PLO on the Israeli Arabs and view the Palestinian state as a potential irridentist force. Besides, they dread the economic losses which a Palestinian-Jordanian federation (even with the inclusion of Israel) in a common market would entail.

The project of "nation-building" in black South Africa — in both the

11. David K. Shipler, *Arab and Jew* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986).

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Charterist/ANC and workerist/socialist vision — rejects black chauvinism and ethnic separatism. The three most important ingredients for nationalism anywhere — a distinct territorial base, a separate language and religion — are all absent for black "nationalism." Africans now form a majority in all metropolitan areas; English is the preferred medium of protest and black intellectual discourse; the most prominent opposition leaders are Christian clergymen. Unlike the separate Palestinian identity — reinforced by territory, language and the different religion of the dominant group — black identity is merely defined in opposition to a policy, not as a different culture. There exists a common Palestinian nationalism; but only a nominal and fragmented African "nationalism."

The political identity of black Africans is the culture of resistance against apartheid. Unlike Palestinians, the history and identity of Africans were never denied. White conquest merely subjugated the conquered and fostered tribalism. Jewish settlement, on the other hand, gradually displaced many Palestinians from their area of birth and made them into stateless refugees. Zionism spawned and nurtured Palestinian nationalism, while apartheid attempted to utilize different histories and cultures for divisive ends. Because apartheid has promoted the concept of different nationalities, its victims cannot embrace the imposed definitions of their oppressor. If nations are "imagined communities," they presuppose self-identification. Because "separate development" has discredited the Bantustan institutional structures, even their extensive patronage does not legitimize tribalism. The nonracialists of the ANC inveigh against an incipient Zulu nationalism as much as against Afrikaner nationalism. Therefore, black South Africa could not engage in the cultural renaissance which produced a Palestinian national consciousness. Should the heterogeneous black South Africans foster a similar revival of distinct cultural traditions, they would fall into the apartheid trap. It was the very apartheid state that has immunized the majority against sectarian nationalism. It has given the oppositional culture an inclusive not an exclusive bent. "People's culture" in South Africa is essentially a political statement: powerless against powerholders. It cannot be reverse racial or ethnic mobilization because it embraces members of all communities. Were the apartheid opposition to disintegrate into an "Africanist only" strategy — as the PAC and, to some extent, the Black Consciousness movement advocated — it would deprive itself of essential support in non-Africanist segments both nationally and internationally.

In both Palestinian and black South African society there also exists a sectarian concept of the nation. It is an uncompromising stance against recognition of the opponent and any pragmatic compromises. The

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challenge to the mainstream nationalists (PLO) by Islamic fundamentalists (Hamas) resembles the ideological clash between ANC and PAC-Africanists. For Hamas, "there is no solution to the Palestinian problem except through Jihad. All initiatives, conferences and proposals are a waste of time." Similarly, for many Africanists, negotiations amount to a sellout. Underlying such distrust is the reluctance of both Islamic and Africanist fundamentalists to consider any realistic compromise formula between ethnic opponents. For Hamas, historical reality is blocked out with religious formula. The whole of historic Palestine, including Israel, is considered "an Islamic trust for all the generations of Moslems until the resurrection." The PLO's decision to recognize Israel by carving out a separate state is for fundamentalists inconceivable because "giving up part of Palestine is like giving up part of religion."

Similarly, Africanists deeply resent the Freedom Charter's stipulation *that the South African land belongs to all who live in it. That would im*ply recognizing conquest. For Africanists, the land belongs to the indigenous inhabitants who were robbed of it through colonialism. Any claims by "colonial settlers," including descendants of 300 year old Afrikaners, are not based on right but on the tolerance of indigenous owners.

Fundamentalists in the territories as well as in South Africa are obviously a minority opinion, compared with the mainstream support for the PLO and the ANC tradition. Not all Islamic militants, for example, support the divisive line of Hamas. Smaller groups, like Islamic Jihad, cooperate with the PLO and played an important role within the Unified National Leadership of the revolt. Similarly many Africanists have switched to the ANC policy for the sake of unity. However, the longer the relative moderate compromise of both PLO and ANC fails to deliver, the more the fundamentalist support could grow in both countries. A bleak reality without hope triggers extremist dreams of utopian salvation.

More so in South Africa than in the territories, the vision of a state that belongs to all who live in it has won out. For a long time the PLO vision of a secular state for Muslims, Jews and Christians in Palestine was very similar to the ANC blueprint of a nonracial state. Nonetheless, the ANC vision of nonracialism has a good chance to be realized, while a secularized Israel/Palestine was never more than a propaganda slogan. The 1988 reluctant PLO acceptance of a two-state, ethnically segregated partition was forced on the PLO because Israel undid partition in 1967. In order to shed this occupation, its victims forced the PLO exiles to a pragmatic accommodation. If the envisaged state of Palestine on the West Bank and Gaza ever becomes a reality, it is likely to be a mirror image of the Jewish state: a homeland for Palestinians only, rather than a

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non-ethnic or multicultural entity. This could lead to a deteriorating situation for the 700,000 Israeli Palestinians, who are then supposed to exercise their rights in their homeland next door.[12] Those well-meaning Israeli academics who argue for partition as the most feasible "option for handling the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip"[13] not only underestimate the growing rightwing support for annexation and outright expulsion (euphemistically called "involuntary transfer"), but also the endangered position of Israeli Palestinians under this scenario.

This universalist, non-ethnic tradition in South Africa testifies to the influence of a Marxist internationalist tradition (in the form of the South African Communist Party), which has always been stronger in a relatively secularized environment than in a conflict perceived in religious terms. The failure of Africanism also demonstrates that neither skin color nor common oppression alone provide a sufficient bond for group solidarity in the absence of a common history and religious or linguistic vehicles for group mobilization. Indeed, the most protracted violence in South Africa does not occur between black and white but arises out of political differences within the racial groups. Both the conflicts within Afrikanerdom and between UDF/Cosatu and Inkatha adherents, for example, supersede in subjective intensity the long diffused racial divide.

The current hegemony of a nonracial resistance tradition in South Africa does not mean it will necessarily prevail in a post-apartheid order nor that it will last forever. Under conditions of extreme scarcity, a politics of exclusion is tempted to use ethnicity to determine who qualifies for patronage. If there is privilege attached to new social identities, they may be just as easily adopted. Dormant histories can be revived to designate outsiders who do not belong. There is a rich tradition of racially bound identities and tribal patronage, ready to be reactivated "voluntarily," precisely because the state imposed definitions have been jettisoned. Repeal of racial laws does not annul decades of racial indoctrination.

There is a vast literature contending that national identity is above all shaped by the exclusion of others: enemies, aliens and minorities. Given the strong legacy of Afrikaner nationalism in a post-apartheid order, the new envisaged nonracial patriotism will not lack enemies, many more real than imagined. The new regime may well be tempted to become as undemocratic as its predecessor by suppressing the advocates of

12. Anton Shammas, "The Morning After," *The New York Review of Books* (September 29, 1988).

13. Yehoshafat Harkabi, *Israel's Fateful Hour* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988); and Sammy Smooha, "Israel's Options for Handling the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip" (1988), ms.

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segmental identities (both white and black) if it wants to keep South Africa from falling apart. Merely fulfilling the expectations of its constituency — many of whom will be unemployed — may push an ANC government into authoritarian restructuring almost against its promise. On the other hand, it will need the human capital of the whites as much as the maintenance of productive investment and international assistance. Unlike whites elsewhere in Africa, even in Zimbabwe, Afrikaners are far too numerous, rooted and "Africanized" to be pushed to leave, confined to farming, or even excluded from political power of whatever ideological persuasion. As an interdependent, industrialized urban economy, which Zimbabwe never was, black and white South Africans are inextricably locked into a common system, unless one side wants to reduce it to a wasteland.

Where the new markers of privilege in a future South Africa will be drawn depends on how the new order has been achieved. If the nonracial apartheid opposition succeeds in controlling the post-apartheid state, it is unlikely that frozen racial lines will designate the new haves and havenots. Interest-based alliances of ideologically diverse groupings rather than racial parties will dominate. Ethnic entrepreneurs thrive on real grievances but would be unsuccessful if the alternative lives halfway up to its promised democratic equality and economic growth. Revenge or even restitution has not been the opposition's battle cry, and a growing post-apartheid economy could meet part of the demand for redistribution.

This gives the South African conflict a fluidity which is lacking in the more clearly defined social boundaries and limited economic resources of the Middle East. Despite the demographic and cultural "orientalization" of Israel by its Sephardic part, a different religion still keeps the people apart. Jews and Arabs cannot even marry legally in Israel. In contrast, the inevitable "Africanization" of South Africa with its large colored middle-group may well bring its population gradually together in an expanding equal consumerism.

Since neither Afrikaner nor black nationalists are spurred by religious fanaticism or racial fundamentalism of the fascist kind, mutual pressures and rising costs of intransigence results in constant accommodation. Unlike in Israel, there are few, if any, non-negotiable absolutes and irreversible thresholds in the South African conflict. Only groups divided along religious lines are uncompromising.[14] In those situations,

14. Ian Lustik, "Israeli State-Building in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip: Theory and Practice," *International Organization*, vol. 41, no. 1 (Winter 1987), pp. 151-71.

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collective identities cannot be redefined. They may even harden under pressure, as in Northern Ireland or in the Punjab. But where it is not a conflict over values and divinely inspired routes to salvation but over differential privilege and power, people are less likely to be easily mobilized for holy wars. They have learned to live with ambiguities. They, above all, cherish individual benefit maximization.

This makes the Israeli-Palestinian conflict far more difficult to solve in one state than the South African strife. On the other hand, partition will remove the two nations in Israel/Palestine from a common political order. Democratic co-existence in a new South African nation therefore proves far more difficult than a potential territorial compromise between Jews and Palestinians. Democracy in South Africa implies a fundamental transformation. By merely shedding its occupied territories, Israel would become again a widely acclaimed democratic polity.

Conclusion: Comparing Prospects for Resolution

Compared with South African black society, Palestinian life remains relatively intact and cohesive. Reinforced by practiced religious beliefs (80% are Muslims, 20% Christians), a separate language, clan ties, functioning schools and land ownership, Palestinian nationalism possesses all the ingredients of a potential rival state. In South Africa, blacks want "in;" in Israel, Palestinians want "out." Where black nationalists stress common bonds (nonracialism, equal citizenship), both Israelis and Arabs emphasize their separateness. Palestinians demand what reactionary Afrikaners readily concede: a separate national state as the second-best option to an unattainable secularized, non-ethnic "Israel". Theoretically, such "partition" can be more easily achieved in the Middle East than a non-racial democracy in South Africa.

Unlike Palestinian society, which looks back to its history for sources of cohesion, the apartheid opposition mobilizes with a vision of a different future. As a commentator has observed, on the West Bank "a return to tradition is taken to be a symbolic political act, synonymous with collective political assertion."[15] In this cultural revival the potential of groups like women or unions is often stifled rather than enhanced. Female rights lead a precarious existence with traditional notions of female subordination in Arab culture. The adversary principle of Palestinian trade union organization is not only viewed suspiciously by Israeli employers, but is also doubted by the more affluent sections of the occupied community.

15. J.M. Winter, *London Review of Books* (July 1, 1988).

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The apartheid opposition (with the exception of Inkatha) does not rely on cultural revivalism. State-sponsorship has discredited a "tribal past" as a mobilizing myth. The Congress leaders promise democracy and freedom in the secularized enlightenment tradition. Theirs is a rational appeal to the liberal ideals of the French and American revolutions.

What distinguishes the multiracial opposition in South Africa is their political program of equal citizenship in a united state. This rational, cross-racial, common bond provides simultaneously strength and weakness in mobilizing attempts, compared with the cultural distinctiveness of Palestinians. It is attractive intellectually but difficult to utilize emotionally. In communal divisions, South Africa represents much more of a common society than the real cultural pluralism in the Middle East.[16]

The Palestinians in the territories experience occupation rather than the ambiguous coexistence dictated by economic interdependence in South Africa. Blacks do not share this sense of invasion. By contrast, Israeli settlers on the West Bank, backed by the army, visibly demonstrate a continuing invasion. According to a growing ultra-right, such as represented by Meir Kahane, more Jewish settlements on biblical land will have to culminate in the final expulsion of all Arabs. Some 50% of the Israeli Jewish population supports continued expulsions, albeit with some guilt feelings, if everything else fails to stop the unrest.

Some of the 70,000 settlers on the West Bank resemble the right-wing Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) in their ideological intransigence and willingness to use force, although most "settlers" are merely interested in cheaper apartments. Their vigilante potential is viewed with some unease by the regular security establishment. Contrary to the AWB, however, which is considered an enemy by the present government in Pretoria, the Israeli settlers are backed by the state. For the Palestinians they are almost an extension of the occupation forces. This blurs the difference between armed personnel and civilians which the ANC recognizes. It also inhibits intercommunal solidarity which the ANC fosters with its emphasis on nonracialism. In short, there is perhaps the possibility of many more South African whites joining a democratic, secularized ANC than left-wing Jews being accepted as allies by Palestinian nationalists and fundamentalists, despite greater debate and realism in Israel.

In South Africa, Afrikaner and African nationalism have always recognized each other. African resistance wants to raise the cost of domination

16. Heribert Adam and K. Moodley, *South Africa Without Apartheid* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

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to force rulers to a negotiated coexistence in a common state. Afrikaner nationalists too claim to aim at a united polity where neither group could dominate the other. Only the ultra-right wants partition. Religious exclusivism prevents potential power-sharing in a secularized state. When one side claims Jerusalem as its holiest place, it will not share proprietary rights. Conflicts over values are therefore much more intractable. Conflicts over power and privilege, as in South Africa, are negotiable.

The danger lies in a refusal by South Africa or Israel to negotiate with their opponent. Only mutual recognition of their legitimacy can restore stability. The longer both governments procrastinate, the more they risk missing out on negotiations. In both subordinate groups, younger extremists increasingly replace traditional nationalists. Brutalized comrades here and battle-hardened shebab (streetkids) there increasingly dictate to the traditional elites. Some already reject PLO leaders as "revolutionaries in luxury," particularly in the refugee camps. Israel may yet long for the days Arafat could make controversial compromises stick, as South Africa would one day want a Mandela to unite a fragmented movement and discipline self-made revolutionaries out of control.

Likewise, it is a popular myth that polarization strengthens the cause of the subject population. In both South Africa and Israel ultra-right parties gain support with new confrontation. Security overrides rational cost calculations. Identity is being redefined as survival. Traditional moral legacies are easily cast aside. Demagogues at both extremes benefit from portraying a sacred cause that is being bargained away, a beloved national family being threatened. In the end, these purists carry the day unless they are preempted by the Bothas and Rabins themselves adopting the symbols of intransigence. In the predicament, both countries will have moved closer to the threshold of fighting it out the longer genuine negotiations are delayed. The technologically superior power is likely to triumph, regardless of moral claims or world opinion. The only realistic end to this course lies in a more forceful joint US-ECC-Soviet intervention in both the Middle East and South Africa in order to force two ethnic states to reason and common sense.

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Introduction to Elkins

Murray Bookchin

The New Left had the decency to fold up its tents when it became hopelessly entrapped in sectarian forms of Marxism toward the end of the 1960s. This, alas, has not been the case with many of the "new social movements" that surfaced in the 1970s. Today, much that passes for feminism, cultural innovation, neo-Marxism, and a pop-anarchism verging on nihilism has found an exotic life in the academy under the rubric of postmodernism. Far from taking a radical turn, many of these movements have simply been integrated into the system.

One area, however, remains embattled and some sectors within it still resist commercialization and adaptation to the *status quo*: the ecology movement. Clearly, co-optation is more often the rule than the exception. Most of the European Greens have become electoral parties barely distinguishable from their liberal cousins. To "green" anything, be it ice cream or an oil tanker, has become a cliché, as witness Britain's new "green" prime minister and her counterparts in Washington, Paris, and Bonn. Nevertheless, the ecological crisis exhibits a persistence that cannot be readily exorcised by the media and political rhetoric. The moonscapes produced by acid rain and worldwide deforestation, not to speak of the putrid air and water to which most urban populations are exposed, are too real to be ignored. The urgency of the crisis brought about by ecological devastation give Stephan Elkins' "The Politics of Mystical Ecology" immediate political relevance. Although he focuses on one work, Fritjof Capra's *The Turning Point*, and seems to be only partially familiar with the "deep" versus "social ecology" clash that has reverberated through the American

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ecology movements, he provides a valuable critical survey of the mentality that has given rise to this dispute.

Capra's work, which has enjoyed enormous success in the US and abroad, has not only provided the garnish for reactionary tendencies in what remains of the "new social movements," in many respects it is the voice for an anti-rational, mystical atavism that has become embedded in pop Western ideology. There is a chilling similarity between the cultural decay that passes for postmodernism today, and its antecedents in the dying ancient world. In both eras, a strident public life seems to have given way to an oppressive sense of powerlessness, followed by a retreat into privatism — all of which culminates in an obsession with personal redemption and mystical union. The ancient world faced this *cul de sac* in a grand fashion. The modern world faces its own *cul de sac* in a mindless eclecticism. Hence the growing market for works on "Paleolithic" religions, homespun recipes on bucolic contentment, a staggering array of mystical cults stressing "cosmic oneness" and "12-step" programs toward egoistic self-indulgence. A recent "alternative" catalogue of wares conducive of union with the cosmos offers a "Gaia Pocket Goddess" which provides the thrill of "thirty thousand years of Earth wisdom in this power image of the Ancestral Goddess." Purchasers can have "Her" for only $15.00. Should they need a quick psychic fix, they can "touch her" and feel a sense of renewal. Or there is the "Dancing Goddess Nightshirt" to "lighten your heart and deepen your sleep!" — the exclamation mark goes with the ad — at only $20.00 a throw. Apparently She dances "with the moon" and offers an ecstatic journey "into dreamtime," presumably in lieu of valium.

The mystics of the past studied ideas as assiduous recluses and tried to feed an intellectual passion for coherence. The mystics of today sell their wares in a feverish marketplace and thrive on an appetite for incoherence that goes under the name of "pluralism" or a degraded form of "unity in diversity." It is here that the commodity, as distinguished from intellectual continuity, makes all the difference: the consumerist maxim that a new product will cure one's spiritual ills, be it a BMW or pap on paper, accounts for the persisting fashionability of Capra's "new paradigm," as it is often called. In any case, whatever "mystical union" it has produced is exemplified by the modern substitute for the ancient agora: the shopping mall.

What is striking about this kind of "mystical union" — be it with Earth goddesses or BMWs — is its ideological volatility. Ideas, however cloaked as sentiments, come and go like the popularity of TV programs.

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The liberal — even "socialist" — word for this brainless flux of titilating items is "pluralism." To suggest a coherent outlook, a measure of intellectual consistency, a distinct logic, one risks damnation as an "elitist" or "old paradigm" rationalist. This kind of studied incoherence with its medley of utterly contradictory ideas characterizes every page of Capra's book. The author's acknowledgments read like the contents of his book: his various ideological debts range from such creditors as Marcuse and Angela Davis to R.D. Laing and the "Esalen community." Presumably this safety net is meant to spare the book from the withering critique it deserves.

What is important is that Capra's "new paradigm," with its hash of contradictory ideas, is not simply a product of co-optation; it is an active factor in *producing* cooptation. By avowing its support of "deep ecology" — essentially a mere wilderness cult — on the basis of "an intuitive awareness of the oneness of all life," the book skirts the need for critical analysis and distinguishes opponent from supporter and religion from rationality.

Not accidentally, this kind of pap has nourished some of the most quiescent tendencies in the ecology movement. One can read Capraesque formulas and "deep ecology" recipes in the Canadian Green Party's claim that it stands for "cooperation" as against "confrontation." One would expect the antonym to be *competition*, not confrontation. But New Age mystics and "deep ecology" acolytes do not "confront," be it the corporate establishment, bourgeois social relations, or the omnipresent State. The implicit notion that it is not competition that is the source of ecological ills but rather "confrontation" — this, in a world that has already been rendered passive-receptive to the point of self-oblivion — is evidence of a ubiquitous "Oneness" with a vengeance. Translated from mystical formulas into real social life, it is an enervating balm that brings corporate managers into "connectedness" with New Age environmentalists, Margaret Thatchers with deep ecologists, and Donald Trumps with dreamy mystics. That Capra and his followers have openly praised corporations for assimilating an ecological mentality by appointing environmental scientists to their boards of directors and for taking token measures to reduce pollutants is compelling evidence of how "new paradigm" thinking serves as an apology for the *status quo*.

The demise of the traditional socialisms has left a vacuum in modern thinking that will not be filled by the reworked formulas of proletarian insurgency and class struggle that became exhausted before WWII.

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Nor will the failure of the Enlightenment to go beyond instrumental rationalism be remedied by a hodge-podge theory of "communicative action." Political, economic, and social disempowerment go hand-in-hand with ideological disempowerment — hence the popularity of "new paradigm" thinking in our own time. New Age mysticism, antirationalism, and "Earth Goddess" religiosity contribute to legitimating today's social and political vacuum. They have made vacuity a virtue in the culture of our times. Post-modernism and its "lit-crit" literature have provided the vulgarities of New Age mysticism with an academic stamp of approval. To be vacuous has thus become a credo, reinforced by "12-step" programs for the alienated and Earth Goddess amulets for the dispirited. This occurs at a time when organic forms of reason have never been more needed.

Capitalism may have restabilized itself much more than anyone could have expected, but it has destabilized its relation with the natural world to an even greater extent. This places present society and mystical ecology at odds with reality. Hence, much as they may seem to be assimilated by society at any given time, the ecological crises must remain a source of social turbulence, irrespective of Capra's sedatives and deep ecology's biocentric mysticism.

It is not accidental that whatever radicalism exists today is permeated by the values of social ecology — a body of ideas predicated on the notion that the domination of nature stems from the domination of human by human. No goddess amulets can provide a substitute for this compelling tendency and the need of a society free of domination as such. No Green movement can ignore these imperatives, however much it seeks the balm of mystical conciliation and "connectedness" with its most predatory opponents. Capra's and his admirers' commitment to mere lifestyle changes, "convivial" enterprises that quickly turn into boutiques, and entrepreneurial "justice" — to use the burgeoning lingo of eco-capitalism — inexorably run up against the need for basic institutional change. Such a change must involve a new politics based on grassroots municipal democracy as distinguished from the centralized state, and confederalism as distinguished from nationalism. If the ecological notion of "unity in diversity" is to mean something more than "cooperation" as distinguished from confrontation, it must entail ideological coherence, a sense of purpose, a social goal including a rational society and an organic rationality. Finally, its "pluralism" must provide the basis for rational dialogue, not chronic confusion or, worse, "mystical union."

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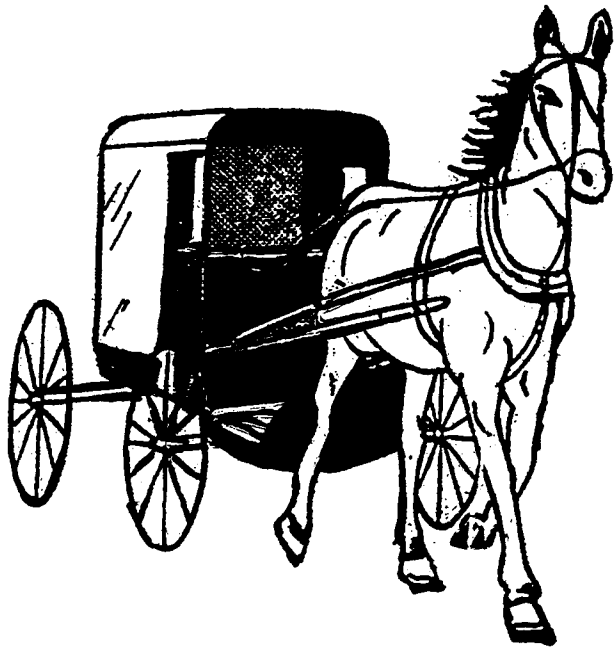
The Green and ecological movements are not likely to be "happy" places in which to function. They must live in stormy seas of dispute. To invoke the hollow cry of "sectarianism" and "dogmatism" in order to legitimate intellectual chaos, programmatic contradictions, and illogicality is only a smokescreen. If what goes under the name of "eco-feminism" *seems to be settling into a deadening Earth Goddess religiosity* and if what passes for neo-Marxism is little more than a tempest in an academic teacup, then the ecology movement holds a much richer promise for the future. It cannot be frittered away in mystical nostrums. A society based on growth, capital accumulation, mindless production and consumption, and privatism cannot live with climatic upheavals, a poisoned planet, and a degree of ecological simplification that is incompatible with the existence of complex life-forms. If this society and its mystical trappings must eventually lead to major social confrontations, it is because it stands in flat ecological contradiction with the very existence of the biosphere. Capra's sedatives offer no solution to these problems. Indeed, they give it a dreamlike unreality that Elkins' work helps to dispatch.



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The Politics of Mystical Ecology

Stephan Elkins

"Building the Green Movement. A National Conference for a New Politics"[1] was the motto of the "first open national Greens gathering" that drew more than 600 people July 2-7, 1987 in Amherst, Massachusetts. Although the gathering was considered a success, it was overshadowed by a clash between the "spiritual" or "holistic" Greens and the "left" Greens personified in Charlene Spretnak and Murray Bookchin respectively. The Left Green position is in the socialist tradition. Social and environmental problems are seen as the consequence of specific social relations of domination.[2] Spiritual Greens view social and environmental problems as the consequence of humanity's spiritual alienation from nature. In this view, Green politics is but one expression of a cultural revolution in industrial societies. This cultural revolution is based on an emerging new ecological paradigm which is gradually superseding the dominant mechanistic worldview bent on power,

1. For conference accounts see *Green Letter*, vol. 3, no. 6 (1987); Mark Satin, "Fear and Longing at the Green Gathering," *New Options*, no. 40 (June 30, 1987); Jay Walljasper,"The Prospects for Green Politics in the U.S.," *Utne Reader* (Sept./Oct.1987), pp. 37-39; Kirkpatrick Sale, "Letter from America" *Resurgence*, no. 125 (Nov./Dec. 1987) and "Deep Ecology and its Critics," *The Nation* (May 14, 1988) pp. 670-75; Murray Bookchin, "Social Ecology vs. Deep Ecology," *Resurgence*, no. 127 (March/April 1988); Charlene Spretnak, "Diversity In Ecofeminism," *The Nation* (April 2, 1988) pp. 446, 476 and "In Defence of Pluralism," *Resurgence*, no.128 (May/June 1988) pp. 43.

2. For a brief overview of the Left Green position see *Call for a Left Green Network* and *Principles of the Left Green Network* (West Lebanon, NH: Left Green Network, 1988). Left Greens are considerably influenced by the concept of "social ecology" developed by Bookchin. See Murray Bookchin, *The Ecology of Freedom* (Palo Alto: Chesire Books, 1982) and *The Modern Crisis* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1986).

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manipulation, and control. Within this framework, ecology is elevated from a scientific discipline to a philosophy often referred to as "deep ecology."[3] By revolutionizing our perception of the world, the establishment of the new paradigm will entail the restructuring of society according to ecological principles, thus allowing reconciliation with nature. In this context Green Politics is understood as "transforming holistic theory into political practice," transcending the outworn political Left/Right cleavage characteristic of the declining old paradigm.[4]

The dispute at Amherst revolved around issues like the role of spirituality and the meaning of ecology. Kirkpatrick Sale, among others, was bewildered by the Left Greens' "tirade" against their spiritually oriented political companions, which initially triggered the argument. The differences "are ones of emphasis and priority, not of fundamental incompatibility," ultimately rooted in individual idiosyncracies which hardly justify "trying to trash the other, working toward some imagined dominant theoretical purity."[5] Unfortunately, things are not so simple. The conflict reflects significant differences in their approaches to society, politics, and social change. The following will probe the theoretical foundations of Spiritual Green thought, focusing on Fritjof Capra's *The Turning Point* — one of the most influential attempts at elaborating this particular strand of Green thought.[6]

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3. The term "deep ecology" was introduced by Naess (see Arne Naess "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement. A Summary," *Inquiry* 16, no. 1 [Spring 1973], pp. 95-100). See also Arne Naess, "The Deep Ecology Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects," *Philosophical Inquiry* 8, no. 1-2 (1986), pp. 10-31; Bill Devall and George Sessions, *Deep Ecology* (Salt Lake City, UT: Peregrine Smith Books, 1985); and Michael Tobias, *Deep Ecology* (San Diego: Avant Books, 1985). For a critique of deep ecology, see Tim Luke, "The Dreams of Deep Ecology," in *Telos* 76 (Summer 1988), pp. 65-92.

4. Charlene Spretnak and Fritjof Capra, *Green Politics. The Global Promise* (Santa Fe, NM: Bear and Company, 1986), p. xxvi. For a short overview of the Spiritual Greens' perspective see Stephen Bodian and Florence Windfall, "Seeing Green," *Yoga Journal*, no.79 (March/April 1988). For a more thorough introduction, see Capra's *The Turning Point. Science Society, and the Rising Culture* (New York: Bantam Books, 1983); and Charlene Spretnak, *The Spiritual Dimension of Green Politics* (Santa Fe, NM: Bear and Company, 1986).

5. "Deep Ecology and its Critics," *op. cit.*, p. 675, and Kirkpatrick Sale, "Letter from America," in *Resurgence*, no. 125 (Nov.-Dec., 1987).

6. Although not an active participant in Green politics, Capra is associated with various Green activists and his writings reflect the general thrust of Spiritual Green thought. The Elmwood Institute, which he founded in 1983 "to facilitate the cultural shift from a mechanistic and patriarchical world view to a holistic and ecological view," is allegedly an intellectual resource base for the Green movement. See Kirkpatrick Sale, "Letter from America," in *Resurgence*, no. 120 (Jan.-Feb., 1987), p. 13; Fritjof Capra, "Das neue Denken ist grün. Interview mit Fritjof Capra," in Matthias Pilgrim

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Crisis and the Dominant Cultural Paradigm

Capra sees the current state of affairs as "a complex of interrelated facets of a single crisis" (25)[7] — a systemic crisis rooted in a profound cultural imbalance he identifies with the prevalent value system and its corresponding worldview which has dominated Western culture for 300 years. He attempts to clarify the relation between cultural imbalance and the underlying value system by means of "Tao," a concept drawn from Chinese philosophy which views reality as "a process of continual flow and change." All phenomena are in constant motion, following cyclical patterns, drawing momentum from the dynamic interplay of two poles — yin and yang. Capra identifies the following characteristics of the yang: masculine, expansive, demanding, aggressive, competitive, rational, analytic, self-assertive; as opposed to those of the yin: feminine, contractive, responsive, cooperative, intuitive, synthesizing, integrative. Cultural imbalance is the product of a systematic overemphasis of the yang at the expense of the yin.

Western culture is dominated by what Capra terms the "Cartesian-Newtonian paradigm" — a worldview based on a distinction between mind and matter, paving the way for the secularization of nature, ultimately allowing its subjugation and instrumentalization. Within this framework, undifferentiated economic and technological growth "are seen as essential by virtually all economists and politicians" (213), which is not surprising given the prevailing notion that the common good results from the maximization of individual wealth. This is a "reflection of linear thinking" (213), since it neglects the fact that unlimited expansion in a finite environment is simply impossible. This perspective is a result of the dissociation of the economy from its social and ecological context.

How does the Cartesian worldview affect social reality? To Capra, social structures and processes are the concrete manifestation of the respective underlying value system. Society is thus the objectification of "yang values." Accordingly, the notion of society as a struggle for existence ruled by the survival of the fittest has generated competitive behavior

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and Steffen Rink, eds., *Zwischen den Zeiten. Das New Age in der Diskussion* (Marburg: Diagonal Verlag, 1989), p. 171. Capra's contact with Spretnak, one of the most prominent representatives of the Spiritual Greens, eventually led to their collaboration on *Green Politics: The Global Promise*, which not only reflects the basic perspective elaborated in *The Turning Point*, but was instrumental in the subsequent organization of the US Green movement.

7. All references to Capra's *The Turning Point* will be indicated by page numbers in parentheses.

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over cooperation; quality of life is equated with material consumption and progress with economic and technological growth (31). Capra identifies the "obsession with growth," a central feature of the economy, as the common denominator for most of today's problems (397). In a society dominated by yang values, people feel increasingly alienated and dissatisfied. Work has been degraded so that its sole purpose has become earning a living; the focus of people's lives has gradually shifted towards recreation and consumption, which is served by a huge industry "exhorting people to ever more wasteful consumption" (231).

The Ecological Paradigm

The new paradigm originated at the beginning of the 20th century when physicists began to realize that their basic conception of reality was inadequate to grasp subatomic phenomena. Basic premises concerning the properties of the natural world were in need of revision. Thus the prevalent mechanistic paradigm has been transcended, leading to a holistic conception of the universe. As in physics, a revaluation of basic assumptions is taking place in other disciplines experiencing similar difficulties.

The emerging new paradigm is based on the systems view of reality in the sense of general systems theory (42). Systems are integrated wholes whose properties cannot be reduced to those of its parts. Systems are not constituted by basic elements, but by relations among them. Although in constant motion, systems nevertheless maintain stable structures. These are, however, not static. Rather, structures are produced and reproduced through continuous dynamic processes following regular patterns. Order is achieved through the coordinating activites of the parts. Consequently, the systems approach focuses on basic principles of organization rather than on basic elements as in the old paradigm. Organisms, societies, and ecosystems are all seen as systems, and must be considered living systems since they possess the capacity for self-organization — the distinguishing feature for living systems.

Capra believes that the emergence of the new paradigm has far-reaching consequences. All systems constitute an integrated web of dynamic relations which cannot be grasped adequately in terms of linear models of cause and effect. Thus, instead of isolating the economy from its social and ecological context and framing it in terms of simplistic, highly unrealistic models based on free markets, perfect competition, and the like, the systems view conceives the economy as "a living system composed of human beings and social organizations in

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continual interaction with one another and with the surrounding ecosystems on which our lives depend" (390). It is this insight into the nonlinear nature of all systems dynamics which constitutes "the very essence of ecological awareness" (390). From an ecological perspective "it becomes evident that our economy, our social institutions, and our natural environment are seriously out of balance" (396).

Capra concludes that the question of scale must be regarded as central to the process of restructuring. Thus variables that have been overstrained will have to return to manageable levels, making decentralization necessary (396). To return to a more human scale requires technologies which incorporate ecological principles (399). Deurbanization will be crucial in view of the fact that the excessive growth of cities poses one of the greatest threats to social and ecological balance. Similarly, political decentralization is urgently needed since the nation-state is no longer an effective unit of governance (398). Decentralization must be accompanied by the redistribution of production and wealth within countries and between industrialized countries and the Third World.

Following Toynbee, Capra attempts to locate the current situation in the context of human cultural evolution. In this view, human history unfolds as an ever recurring cycle of genesis, growth, culmination, and decline of civilizations, the decisive variable being the ability of a society to adapt to changing circumstances. While the ossified cultural mainstream clings to outdated concepts, creative minorities appear on the scene, providing new solutions, thus initiating a new phase of cultural evolution. Capra believes we are presently experiencing a process of profound cultural transformation; the transition to the "solar age" is well on its way (408). Periods of cultural transformation are preceded by a variety of social indicators, many of which can be observed today. "They include a sense of alienation and an increase of mental illness, violent crime, and social disruption, as well as an increased interest in religous cultism — all of which have been observed in our society during the past decade" (26). Among several transitions, Capra identifies three "that will shake the very foundations of our lives and will deeply affect our social, economic, and political system" (29): the decline of patriarchy, the decline of the fossil fuel age, and a paradigm shift, "a profound change in the thoughts, perceptions, and values that form a particular vision of reality" (30).

The overemphasis on yang values is currently being counteracted by the multitude of social movements, the emergence of which we have been experiencing since the 1960s. They are the bearers of the shift to

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the new ecological paradigm, representing the ascendant culture. So far these movements are preoccupied with separately promoting certain aspects of the ecological paradigm, not yet realizing the extent to which their purposes interrelate. Once recognizing the commonality of their aims, Capra believes, they will flow together to "form a powerful force of social transformation" (46). With the further concretization of the "new vision of reality," he claims that "a critical mass of awareness" (418) will be reached, leading to the creation of new political parties, some of which have already been formed in various countries.

For Capra, this process of transformation is inevitable. Following Chinese philosophy he argues that change is a "natural tendency, innate in all things and situations" and "does not occur as a consequence of some force" (37). Contrary to views of social evolution that emphasize the role of struggle and conflict, such as the Marxist, which reflect old paradigm thinking, Capra believes it is necessary to minimize conflicts during times of social transition (35). Since change is an inherent property of all reality, resulting from the "continuous oscillation" between yin and yang, there is no need to engage in or even aggravate conflict as a means of bringing it about. Conventional political parties as well as the traditional Left and Right, and most of our economic, political, and academic institutions are all part of the declining culture. The dominant social institutions will continue imposing their outdated views, but will gradually "disintegrate" during the process of decline.

Value System, Worldview, and Social Structure

Capra's analysis of social processes is based on an idealistic view of society. People subjected to a common culture share a certain worldview and its implicit value system, which motivates and guides their actions. Out of this context they create corresponding lifestyles, social institutions, technologies, etc. In spite of his claim "to show how the strikingly consistent preference for yang values, attitudes, and behavior patterns has resulted in a system of academic, political, and economic institutions . . ." (39), Capra fails to reflect on how structures and values may interrelate, simply assuming a linear relation of cause and effect. This is somewhat paradoxical in light of his constant emphasis on the interrelatedness of all phenomena. It implies there is a homogeneous culture based on a consensual value system, and that these values are indeed congruent with those expressed in the selectivity of social structures. Although values and social structures are of course interrelated, one cannot simply be considered the reflection of the other. Ironically,

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systems theory — so highly praised by Capra — has emphasized the independence of structures from values and beliefs.[8]

Not only does Capra fail to explain how values relate to structures, he further omits any systematic attempt to address the process of value formation: How do values come about in the first place? He provides three kinds of "explanations" when he does occasionally touch upon the issue: a) value systems and corresponding worldviews simply change over time, following regular patterns of cyclical fluctuation (31-32); b) value systems change in response to environmental challenges (190); c) components of value systems and worldviews are subject to processes of manipulation through social institututions. For instance, the "public is brainwashed" (219), "farmers are indoctrinated" (255), consumers are "induced to buy, use, and throw away" (236), and their tastes and opinions are conditioned through advertising (248). Despite the fact that these are of little explanatory value, they at least acknowledge that values do not simply cause structures while being independent of them. Lamenting over the perceived deficiencies of the prevailing value system, it never seems to occur to Capra that there are reasons for the way people think rooted in their everyday experience, which has little to do with Descartes or Newton. Presumably, there is a certain appropriateness concerning the values people develop in coping with everyday life. These reasons do not simply cease to exist just because one has been informed on the "actual nature of reality."

Since social structures are understood as the immediate reflection of prevailing "culture" — essentially meaning "collective consciousness" — it is not surprising that Capra's critique lacks systematic social analysis. It hardly reaches beyond the level of a superficial critique of culture which is thereby reduced to a social-psychological category. Accordingly, the continuous growth of economic production is traced back to "our obsession with growth," overlooking the fact that in a capitalist economy the pursuit of growth is a compulsive structural feature independent of personal preferences; economic decline being the price paid by any economic entity failing to achieve a level of accumulation sufficient to maintain profits. By identifying the problem as an "obsession" Capra denies the autonomous dynamic of the economic process, disregarding the fact

8. For a systems theoretic account of the indifference of the political and juridical systems towards individual values and beliefs, see Niklas Luhmann, *Legitimation durch Verfahren* (Frankfurt a M: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1969). In Capra's account of social and environmental problems this is repeatedly acknowledged, apparently without realizing the implications.

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that in his description of concrete problems it is acknowledged repeatedly. In defining the cause as an "obsession" an adequate understanding of structural problems is obstructed by creating the impression that Western civilization has been overcome by some collective psychosis, as if people were attempting to satisfy some compulsive urge in the pursuit of economic growth. Likewise, the nuclear arms race is rooted in an "obsession with winning" and "aggressive behavior," both characteristic for patriarchical culture (242). The expansion of nuclear power is due to an elite's "obsession with power" (247-48), etc.

Capra's account of economic processes provides further illustrations of how his failure to analyze structural dynamics distorts the nature of social problems. He claims that the "desire for indefinite expansion" is rooted in the corporate structure. ". . .corporate executives who knowingly bypass an opportunity for increasing the corporation's profits, for whatever reason, are liable to lawsuit. Thus maximizing of profits becomes the ultimate goal, to the exclusion of all other considerations" (221). This suggests that the fundamental problem lies not in the logic of the system of production as such, but rather in the constitutive features of corporations. Accordingly, resulting problems are not the result of the unequal distribution of private property in the means of production. Rather, "corporate property" and "state capitalism" — a perversion of the original idea of private property, so to speak — is considered as problematic (221). It is thus not surprising that Capra's objections are not directed against property relations but against the structure of corporations.

Social Change

Capra's model of social change is an eclectic potpourri lacking internal coherence. He seems to arbitrarily draw on any concept that promises to support a point he would like to make, irrespective of mutual consistency; the common denominator being their adherence to a view of social change as a regular process following a cyclical pattern.[9] The most fundamental problem with his account is its determinism, which contradicts the proposed systemic paradigm since, according to this concept, the outcome of change is basically indeterminate: "When

9. At least four concepts are presented, the interrelations of which are left unclear: Taoism's "dynamic interplay" of yin and yang; Toynbee's cyclical rise and decline of civilizations; Sorokin's conception of history as a product of fluctuating value systems; systems theory, according to which change is the result of processes of self-transcendence, resulting in continuously increasing complexity.

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a system becomes unstable, there are always at least two new possible structures into which it can evolve" (288). If this is the case, how then can any specific outcome be deemed inevitable?

Capra identifies a whole range of social pathologies in our society that typically accompany transitional phases. However, these are unfortunately anything but precise. How can one measure "sense of alienation," "mental illness," etc? How can one determine if people today are more alienated, mentally ill, and so on than they were let's say 50 years ago? What level of mental illness, violent crime, etc. can be considered a reliable indicator for an approaching transition? In addition to the quicksilver nature of his indicators, Capra provides no precise criteria that would justify any prediction of the *direction* of social development. How can we know that the achievements with respect to women's rights reflect the decline of patriarchy and not simply its reorganization? As a point of comparison, the elimination of feudal bonds during the transition to capitalism was not equivalent to the elimination of domination, but only a change in its specific mode. Similarly, there is no reason why the exhaustion of fossil fuels necessarily entails "radical changes in our economic and political systems." Why should solar-powered capitalism differ fundamentally from its fossil-fuel-powered ancestor?

As Nemitz points out, the problem with Capra's or any other deterministic philosophy of history is that it proposes a guaranteed outcome.[10] Aside from theoretical deficiencies, such a perspective can have devastating consequences for radical political movements. Determinism hinders insight into the capacity for adaption a social system might still be able to mobilize, thus obstructing the ability to develop appropriate political strategies. It furthers passivity and opportunism since the desired goal will ultimately be achieved irrespective of individual action. Consequently, a precise understanding of the concrete historical situation and its dynamics becomes superfluous.

In striking contrast to his optimistic account of social change, Capra draws a gloomy picture of omnipotent corporations controlling economies, politics, media, academic and other educational institutions, permeating "virtually every facet of public life" (220-21). Allegedly, "their political power surpasses that of many national governments" (220) and "there are no laws to deal effectively with these giant

10. Rolf Nemitz, "Yin und Yang und die neuen sozialen Bewegungen. Über Capras technokratische Romantik," *Das Argument* (September 1985), Sonderband 125, p. 158.

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institutions" since the growth of their power "has outstripped the development of an appropriate legal framework" (221). This has led to the present situation where "crucial decisions are not made in the national interest but rather in the interest of dominant corporations" (228). These pressure, manipulate (253), control, (219), brainwash (219), condition (218), indoctrinate (255), etc. politicians, researchers, technicians, and the population in general in their effort to maximize their power and profits. These institutions are vigorously opposed to change (262) and willing to exercise their power and even apply force to protect what they perceive as being their interests (248). It is thus not surprising when Capra points out that the solar transition — being a political not a technical problem — "generates clashes between social and private interests" (408).

The problem of power epitomizes the deficiencies of Capra's analysis. He deals with the decline of the prevailing order and the rise of the new as if these developments somehow go past each other without much interference. Whenever the discussion broaches concrete problems, however, he points out that any attempt at change will encounter fierce resistance from dominant institutions.[11] What then does it mean that the dominant social institutions will "decline and disintegrate," that the ascendent culture "eventually will assume its leading role," and that this can take place with a minimum of conflict since it accords with the time, in a context dominated by the seemingly all-encompassing power of old paradigm institutions? How are the "new cultural forces" to establish themselves in light of unfavorable power relations?

Capra's answer is rooted in Taoism. Since change is inevitable, the question of political strategy is of secondary importance, just as long as it is in accordance with the "natural flow of things." In practice, however, it is difficult to comprehend how these clashes of interests will be decided in favor of change by avoiding conflict.[12] As Nemitz has argued, the

11. In his discussion of corporate power Capra reveals a simplistic, mechanistic concept of power. Corporations impose their "will" in various ways on their social environment. This possiblity of imposing one's will already presupposes a structural correspondence on the part of the submitted system enabling such influence. Thus this underlying relation is what needs to be explained. See Claus Offe, "Political Authority and Class Structures — An Analysis of Late Capitalist Societies," *International Journal of Sociology* 2 (1972), pp. 73-108; and "Structural Problems of the Capitalist State. Class Rule and the Political System. On the Selectiveness of Political Institutions," *German Political Studies*, vol. 1 (1974), pp. 31-57.

12. When dealing with the practical aspects of social change Capra's principal strategy is dodging the issue. Consider the following: "To facilitate the cultural transformation, it will therefore be necessary to restructure our system of information and education, so that the new knowledge can be presented and discussed appropriately. Much of

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point is not to minimize conflict for the sake of harmony, but to identify those conflicts which are unavoidable.[13]

When Capra finally does address the practical side of the problem of social change he has no other perspective to offer than the emergence of "new paradigm political parties" that will draw flocks of disenchanted citizens to the polls, all voting for revolution. Since social and ecological problems are ultimately seen to be the consequence of misconceived values and ideas, social change is contingent upon the ability to communicate the insights of the new paradigm. Capra's idea that communicating the New Age message will automatically motivate masses of disenchanted non-voters to make a run on the polls is not too convincing. Why should Capra's message be particularly attractive to, e.g., an unemployed single mother of three living in the slums of South Bronx? Presumably, the call for voluntary simplicity, the condemnation of materialistic values, and the insight that her situation is rooted in ours and thus her obsession with yang values and corresponding inadequate perception of reality would hardly appear plausible to her, especially since a lot of her immediate concerns are very much "materialistic," i.e., a decent job, fair pay, appropriate housing, child and health care, and the like.[14]

Moreover, the suggested political strategy presumes that the political system in Western democracies is composed of politically neutral institutions which can be used for whatever purpose by the respective majority. Hence, political change is ultimately a question of appropriate personnel. It does not occur to Capra that there are obstacles to the simple instrumentalization of the political system for radical change which lie in its own structure as well as in the specific relation to its social

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this restructuring of information is already being done successfully by citizens movements . . . However, if the new ecological awareness is to become part of our collective consciousness, it will have to be transmitted, eventually, through the mass media. These are presently dominated by business . . . and their contents are censored accordingly. The public's right of access to the mass media will thus be an important aspect of the current social change. Once we succeed in reclaiming our mass media, we can decide what needs to be communicated and how to use the media effectively to build our own future" (409). The decisive question, *how* we are to reclaim "our mass media" is simply skipped by the term "*once*." How are we supposed to do that? Is this going to take place without conflict? Maybe we just need to wait until CBS, Warner Brothers, Rupert Murdoch's media empire, and the like simply "disintegrate"? Capra's vagueness increases exponentially whenever he approaches the decisive issues.

13. Nemitz, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

14. See, for example, *Green Letter*, vol. 5, no. 1 (Spring 1989), especially Jesus Sanchez, "The environment: Whose movement?," on the problem of class and racial barriers in organizing the Green movement in general and resistance to environmental destruction in particular.

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environment.[15] It is thus not clear that gaining a majority in an election would automatically allow for profound social change.[16]

Nature, Science and Society

In Capra's account the new paradigm appears as a kind of doctrine of salvation. The application of its insights, reflecting the "systemic wisdom of nature," will allow the reestablishment of balance and harmony in society as well as in our relation to nature. His assumption that alternative values, worldviews, and principles for social organization can be derived from insights into natural processes is highly problematic. A society's concept of nature is not an "objective" description taken from its natural environment. Rather, it is a social product; the result of cognitive, normative, and symbolic construction.[17] In constructing "nature" it is not simply nature as an objective entity which is being described. A society's view of nature must be seen as part of its self-interpretation, reflecting social relations and its relation to the natural environment.[18] Nature is given meaning in society which it does not have apart from it. It is thus impossible to develop any socially neutral concept of nature. In constructing nature, society can ultimately refer to nothing other than itself.[19] Accordingly, Capra's attempt to develop the philosophical implications inherent in nature is a tautological undertaking. Meaning is derived from nature as empirical fact

15. It has been pointed out that the political system is relatively autonomous *vis-à-vis* societal interests and influence. This, however, has nothing to do with neutrality or indifference towards societal interests, rather, the preferential treatment of certain interests is structurally guaranteed. See Claus Offe, "Thesis on the Theory of the State," in Claus Offe, *Contradictions of the Welfare State* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984) and "Political Authority and Class Structures," *op.cit.*

16. That the electoral process is an unsuitable instrument for bringing about radical change is incidentally also argued by systems theory. See Niklas Luhmann, *Legitimation durch Verfahren*, *op. cit.*

17. Klaus Eder, *Die Vergesellschaftung der Natur* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1988).

18. Egon Becker, "Natur als Politik?" in Thomas Kluge ed., *Grüne Politik. Der Stand einer Auseinandersetzung* (Frankfurt a/M: Fischer Verlag, 1984), p. 112.

19. This viewpoint is shared by systems theory. Thus, Luhmann points out that society is not *part* of nature. Rather, society is the totality of meaningful communication. In this sense, communication is an exclusively social operation. Although society is an open system, it is operationally closed. Society cannot communicate *with* its environment but only *about* it. The environment cannot be relevant to society in any immediate sense. It can enter society only to the extent that it is communicated and thus transformed socially. What is communicated is not the environment but what society takes to be the environment. See Niklas Luhmann, *Ökologische Kommunikation* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1986), pp. 62-63.

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which is actually ascribed to nature in the process of interpretation.[20]

Capra's attempt to derive criteria for action from nature is all the more surprising since he himself emphasizes the socially conditioned relativity of human knowledge in his critique of conventional scientific assumptions. He argues that in research on subatomic particles scientists were confronted with the phenomenon that the answers one gets depends on the questions one asks (78, 87). Following this argument there can be no absolute certainty with respect to our knowledge of the world. The results obtained in any research process are inherently related to the theory and methodology guiding it, which leads Capra to conclude: ". . . modern physics has not only invalidated the classical idea of an objective description of nature but has also challenged the myth of value-free science. The patterns scientists observe in nature are intimately connected with the patterns of their minds; with their concepts, thoughts, and values" (87). If this is the case, it is difficult to see how criteria for action derived from nature could be anything but the reflection of normative assumptions projected upon nature in the process of description and analysis.

From this Capra proceeds to draw an inadequate conclusion: "The fact that all properties of particles are determined by principles closely

20. Consider the following argument: "Detailed study of ecosystems over the past decades has shown quite clearly that most relationships between living organisms are essentially cooperative ones. . . . Even predator-prey relationships that are destructive for the immediate prey are generally beneficient for both species. This insight is in sharp contrast to the views of Social Darwinists, who saw life exclusively in terms of competition, struggle, and destruction. Their view of nature has helped create a philosophy that legitimates exploitation and the disastrous impact of our technology on the natural environment. But such a view has no scientific justification, because it fails to perceive the integrative and cooperative principles that are essential aspects of the ways in which living systems organize themselves at all levels" (279). Against the individualistic, antagonistic conception of the Darwinian view of nature, Capra proposes a picture of nature as a network of cooperative relations. The "incorrect" view of nature has allegedly been invalidated by means of scientific inquiry in favor of the accurate understanding of natural relations as "essentially cooperative ones." Capra's argument suggests that the disagreement is located on the level of the cognitively adequate comprehension of an empirical relation. The disagreement does, in fact, not refer to the accuracy of the understanding of the empirical phenomenon, but rather to the *meaning ascribed* to it. Contrary to the implications of Capra's argument, this is not an issue that can be decided by scientific inquiry. Whether the relation between predator and prey is considered cooperative or antagonistic is essentially a matter of perspective, reflecting different normative conceptions. See Ludwig Trepl, *Geschichte der Ökologie* (Frankfurt a/M: Athenäum, 1987), p. 192, note 66. Capra is correct in his assessment of the antagonistic view of nature as an ideology for the legitimation of exploitative relations. The view of nature as a struggle for survival is nothing following from nature but, rather, its historically specific interpretation. However, he commits the same fallacy as the Social Darwinists by naturalizing the social.

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related to the methods of observation would mean that the basic structures of the material world are determined, ultimately, by the way we look at this world; that the observed patterns of matter are reflections of patterns of mind" (93). While some of this is accurate, "that the observed patterns of matter are reflections of patterns of mind," the preceding formulation suggests that there indeed is no world apart from our perception of it; our thoughts and values being constitutive of the world. This would indeed be a good argument supporting Capra's idealism, but obviously runs counter to any attempt to establish the autonomy of natural processes from which criteria for action could be derived.[21]

Capra is correct that our relation to nature expresses a culturally specific normative conception. However, he ultimately fails to address the question of how precisely it is rooted in the structure of the criticized system of knowledge. The mechanistic view of nature is simply equated with an exploitative relation to nature as if it were the necessary consequence of the other. In positing the ecological paradigm's revolutionary potential it is mistakenly assumed that the cognitive process of learning, which systems theory may represent compared with mechanistic concepts, necessarily implies a process of moral learning. It is, however, difficult to see why an understanding of nature in terms of systems theory should automatically entail any fundamental revision in society's relation to nature. Systems theory is no less "reductionist" than Newtonian mechanics. Its principle of reduction is merely different: the totality of ecological relations are selectively reduced to *functional* relations that can be dealt with by means of conventional science. Contrary to Capra's enthusiastic account, systems theory does not break with the logic of a utilitarian, exploitative relation to nature but represents the perfection of technocratic control. Capra attacks conventional science and technology for its fragmenting, reductionist character, which neglects destructive side effects of human action, only to propose intervention guided by systems theory which, when failing to adequately address the structural roots of society's destructive relation to the natural environment, promises no less than the systematic instrumentalization of nature as a self-reproducing "bio-cybernetic world-machine."[22] The essential progress is the insight that the further exploitation of nature requires taking minimal conditions for its reproduction into consideration.

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21. A more adequate conclusion would be that all properties *ascribed* to particles are determined by principles related to the methods of observation, and thus what *appears* to be the basic structure of the material world is contingent on the way one looks at it.

22. Becker, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

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Capra questions the excessive emphasis on rationality in Western culture, which has led to "scientism": the insistence on the scientific method as the only acceptable approach to knowledge. Thus the development of ecological awareness has been obstructed, which runs counter to the linear and analytic nature of rational thought. This "obsession with rationality" is a major root of the ecological crisis. Capra's critique, however, remains caught in dominant ideology.

A question that arises in this context is: Why should rational thought necessarily be linear, reductionist, and thus *intrinsically opposed* to ecological awareness? Similarly, with respect to ecological awareness: In which sense is the insight into ecological relations a question of intuition? Unfortunately, Capra fails to defend his claim. On the contrary, he concedes that "scientific thinking does not necessarily have to be reductionist and mechanistic" (48) while presenting physics, "the manifestation of an extreme specialization of the rational mind" (47) as a source of the ecological paradigm. Systems theory, as its theoretical core, is very much a product of the "rational mind." It may represent a shift from a linear, causal, and static to a non-linear, functional, and dynamic conception of reality, but most certainly not a shift from a rational to an intuitive mode of cognition.[23]

Capra's belief in science is essentially unbroken. His critique is ultimately directed only at scientific conceptions he considers inadequate. As far as his rejection of scientism is concerned, it stands in odd contrast to his presentation of systems theory — a scientific concept — as an all-encompassing formula to explain the world, the cosmos, and even God! In this respect, it is difficult to see the difference between Capra's procedure and the attempts to model the universe in terms of mechanical laws.[24] His critique of scientism notwithstanding, Capra

23. Capra's rejection of reason for intuition has questionable implications. Thus, how are conclusions to be reached on the basis of some mix of intuition and rationality — whatever that may be? How are we to decide between divergent intuitions? Imagine a conservative nationalist, drawing on the insight into the "nonlinearity of systems," intuitively reaches the conclusion that the "dynamic balance" of a society is disturbed by a perceived "excess" of foreign immigrants. In accordance with the systemic insight that "if you do something that is good, then more of the same will not necessarily be better" (41) he might suggest it is necessary to get rid of these people. Now my intuition may tell me something different, but why should my intuition be better than someone else's?

24. Nemitz criticizes this for reproducing the fallacy of the Cartesian-Newtonian worldview by indiscriminately applying a concept that may well be appropriate within a limited realm to other domains. See Nemitz, *op. cit.*, p. 163. In this respect, see also Stephen Jay Gould, "Utopia (Limited)," *New York Times Book Review* (March 3, 1983). Gould points out the problem with Capra's attempt to extrapolate the insights of physics to apply to all of nature.

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actually ascribes a vanguard role to science in revolutionizing the prevailing worldview; from a source of destruction, science undergoes an instant metamorphosis to a potential for salvation. Despite all claims to the contrary, it is physics which leads the way.[25]

Political Implications of Mystical Ecology

Capra substitutes a mystified, systems-theoretical version of sociobiology for social analysis.[26] As a concept of social order, his philosophy reveals anti-emancipative implications. He posits a systems-theoretical view of nature as an apodictic framework: the perceived "laws of nature" are definite, noncircumventable laws of being. As an integral part of nature society cannot evade them. Thus the question of the adequacy or desirability of a social order is not a contingent issue to be resolved in social discourse. Like it or not, there is ultimately no other choice than to adapt the rules of the game or engage in self-destruction. Nature is simply the way things are.

Once a naturalistic paradigm is commonly accepted as a frame of reference for the legitimacy of a social order, attention is diverted from the real issue of the underlying normative assumptions to the pseudo-issue of society's correspondence with the "principles of nature." Consequently, emancipatory goals such as the abolition of relations of domination become contingent on the ability of proving such correspondence. Positing nature as the ultimate point of reference further results in the difficulty to distinguish conflicting political concepts using formally analogous modes of reasoning. The way is open for any ideology sharing an "ecological" framework to climb on the bandwagon. Current developments in parts of the European Right are a case in point. In their attempt to modernize conservative ideology, authoritarian political concepts are supported by systems-theoretic, naturalistic, and sometimes spiritually transfigured arguments.[27] Capra himself proves the point when

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25. See Capra, *The Turning Point*, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-49. For a critique of Capra's scientism see Rosemarie Rübsamen, "Der Wolf hat Kreide gefressen — bewahrt euer Mißtrauen gegenüber der Wissenschaft!" *Beiträge zur feministischen Theorie und Praxis* 12 (1984), pp. 61-67. See also Becker, *op. cit.*, p. 118, who has pointed out that latent scientism is rather typical for the proponents of ecology as a doctrine of guidance.

26. While Capra rejects sociobiology for its "reductionist" concept of genetic determinism (115), he fails to understand its quintessential fallacy. Its fundamental problem is not genetic determinism but the reduction of the social to the level of the biological or "natural," of which genetic determinism is merely a manifestation. This lack of understanding becomes apparent in his reproduction of the sociobiological fallacy.

27. See Peter Dudek, "Konservatismus, Rechtsextremismus, und die Philosophie der Grünen," in Kluge, *Grüne Politik*, *op. cit.*, pp. 90-108. Consider the following passage

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he praises Heidegger as part of the tradition of the new paradigm, able to provide direction for an ecological reorientation of society (412). Excited by the intriguing similarities between his own philosophy and Heidegger's critique of Western civilization, Capra overlooks that the Heidegger's identification with Nazism may have been rooted in his philosophy.[28]

Unfortunately, the issue is not merely a theoretical one. Its practical relevance has recently been demonstrated by American environmental activists subscribing to the deep-ecological perspective, which have triggered a debate on principles among the US Green movement.[29] These environmentalists have argued that starvation in Ethiopia is a natural and thus acceptable process of nature seeking its own balance,[30] US

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from Rolf Kosiek's critique of the development of post-WWII German society: "By condemning and stigmatizing the biological as well as the significance of living systems, questions of ecological balance have been suppressed. Humans and their environment were thought to be arbitarily conditionable, manufacturable and alterable; an actually already overcome mechanistic-materialistic view of technology gained acceptance. . . Progress and growth were the driving slogans of previous decades. . . . The fact that a continuous process of growth . . . ultimately would destroy every state of balance . . . was not taken into account. . . . Conservative policies aimed at the preservation of natural balance . . . were depreciated and rejected." "Instead of cutting down production a bit in times of economic boom, thus reducing unavoidable environmental pollution and stretching growth more organically over a longer period of time, millions of foreigners were imported like commodities . . . Now, in the course of emerging economic problems . . . they . . . threaten to destroy our welfare system and form an explosive sociopolitical issue . . . Additional masses were pressed into West Germany . . . without taking into consideration that every system has limits of adaption, which in our region have already far been exceeded. . . . In some large cities the inner city is already captured by foreigners. A turkish ghetto in Berlin is unnatural, an integration or germanization is genocide, and inhuman, and a crime against the inner world of people. Ten thousands of foreigners in a German city . . . amount to an environmental modification of the greatest extent, the destruction of a natural state grown during a long period of time. . ." Rolf Kosiek, "Geistige Grundlagen der Umweltzerstörung. Die Frage nach den Ursachen," in *Nation Europa*, vol. 32, no. 5 (1982), pp. 5-10.

28. Farias has argued that Heidegger's political orientation was not an accident, but a logical consequence of his philosophy. See Victor Farias, *Heidegger und der Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt: Fischer Verlag, 1989). For a dissenting analysis, see Paul Gottfried's review of Farias' book, "Heidegger on Trial" in *Telos* 74 (Winter 1987-88), pp.147-51.

29. This was one of the issues resulting in the previously mentioned dispute at the Amherst Green conference. For a discussion of the "ecology debate" within the American Green movement, see Brian Tokar, "Exploring the New Ecologies. Social Ecology, Deep Ecology and the Future of Green Political Thought," *Alternatives*, vol. 15, no. 4 (1988), pp. 30-43. See also George Bradford, "How Deep Is Deep Ecology?" *Fifth Estate*, vol. 22, no. 3 (Fall 1987), pp. 3-30; Murray Bookchin, "Crisis in the Ecology Movement," *Zeta Magazine* (July/August 1988), pp. 121-23 and "Social Ecology vs. Deep Ecology," *Socialist Review* (Summer 1988), pp. 9-29.

30. Dave Foreman, an activist of a radical environmentalist group named "Earth First!" cited in Bradford, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-18.

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culture is in danger of "Latinization" with corresponding destructive consequences as the result of an uncontrolled influx of Latin immigrants,[31] AIDS is applauded as Earth's self-regulatory response to the problem of human overpopulation,[32] etc. The parallels to the racist discourse of the European Right are obvious. Now, the logic of Capra's concept provides no internal criteria for distancing oneself from such a position, other than insisting that it reflects an erroneous interpretation of nature. Consequently, spiritualists conclude, these statements constitute "the most extreme comments by a small number of individuals" which are somehow out of touch with the core concepts,[33] failing to grasp that it is the concept itself that allows such interpretation.

With some justification it can be argued that Capra's concept is potentially an ideology for domination. Since the "laws of nature" are not simply self-evident, the problem remains how to identify and interpret them with respect to social reality. He suggests two possible solutions. First, there is scientific research guided by the new paradigm able to decipher nature's wisdom and make it accessible to humanity. Second, there is intuition. Due to their privileged access to the fundamental truth of the new paradigm, those who master these techniques are predisposed to guide humanity towards salvation.[34] One might speculate whether the ecological paradigm may provide an adequate ideology for

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31. Edward Abbey, also an Earth First! activist cited in Bradford, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

32. Miss Ann Thropy, a pseudonym, in an Earth First! publication cited in Brad Edmondson, "Is AIDS Good for the Earth?" *Utne Reader*, no. 24 (Nov./Dec. 1987), p. 14 and Daniel Keith Conner, another member of "Earth First!" "Is AIDS the answer to an environmentalist's prayer?," originally published in *Earth First! The Radical Environmental Journal* (Dec. 22, 1987), reprinted in *Utne Reader*, no. 27 (May/June 1988).

33. Charlene Spretnak, "Diversity in Ecofeminism," *op. cit.*, p. 476.

34. The anti-democratic implications of this claim to absolute truth become apparent in the following quote: "Green politics attracts people who have been searching for a way to transform new-paradigm understandings into political practice. . . Unfortunately, in nearly every country where a Green movement has been established, it has also attracted opportunistic persons from unsuccessful groups on the right and left who enter the new movement with hidden agendas and dishonest tactics. Identifying and banning them are difficult . . . However, persons who undermine the progress of Green political development by repeatedly trying to impose their own incongruous priorities should not be allowed to ruin the movement. Although allegiance to . . . a declaration would not preclude the possibility of dishonesty, it would clarify the movement's expectations of its members. If infiltration actually occurs, additional means would have to be devised to address it" (Spretnak and Capra, *Green Politics*, *op. cit.*, pp. 217-18). Who decides on the appropriate agenda and priorities, the movement's expectations, etc.? What are the criteria — adherence to the "new paradigm" doctrine? This account hardly sounds like anything resembling the principles of grass roots democracy praised by the authors. In this respect, see also Herbert P. Kitschelt, "The Global Promise of Green Politics," in *Theory and Society*, vol. 14, no. 4 (July 1985), pp. 525-32.

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the legitimation of a privileged position of a class of technocrats in a society in which skill, as a productive resource, is becoming increasingly important. This impression is fostered by the tendency to combine cognitive with moral competence, as if the former naturally qualifies with respect to the latter.[35] Just as the ascendant bourgeoisie established its rule with the promise of freedom and equality on its banner, which turned out to apply only to the freedom and equality of the propertied, in the course of events Capra's ecological paradigm may serve to justify the displacement of the propertied through the "competent."

Speculation aside, a sober look at Capra's philosophy finds little, if any, perspective for emancipatory social change. Given its failure to deal with the structural roots of current social developments and problems, its determinism and naiveté regarding politics, it is unlikely to lead anywhere. Capra's ecological paradigm — at least its systems-theoretical core — is indeed being adapted widely. However, far from being a cultural revolution, it can be expected to find its way into contemporary crisis management as an instrument for the perfection of technocratic control — a pragmatic response to the increasing complexity of structural problems — while leaving the prevailing social order essentially untouched. In the final analysis, Capra mystifies far more than he clarifies. By blurring the structural roots of social problems, discarding reason as an inadequate means of cognition, and proposing a naturalistic paradigm as a common frame of reference, he paves the way for authoritarian strategies to solve social problems.

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35. In this respect, see Michael Weingarten, "Die Herrschaft der Schamanen. Die Naturwissenschaftler auf dem Weg zum organischen Intellektuellen des Kapitals," in *Forum Wissenschaft*, no. 3 (1986), pp. 43-48.

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Durkheim and the Principles of 1789: The Issue of Gender Equality

Guenther Roth

The universalist project of modernity centers on the abolition of personal rule and subordination. For this reason, the principles of the French Revolution — *liberté-egalité-fraternité* — have been appealed to by generations of feminists, from revolutionary contemporaries such as Olympe de Gouges, who wrote *Declaration des droits de la femme et de la citoyenne* in 1791, to the German abolitionist Anna Pappritz in 1900, and Elizabeth Badinter today. In her account of the French women's movement, Pappritz wrote: "More than a century ago the sonorous phrases *liberté*, *egalité*, *fraternité*, a second gospel as it were, rang like bells through the world, promising a new and better time, but with regard to the female half of humanity they turned into shrill dissonance and bitter irony."[1] Only today, argues Badinter, is there a chance "to complete the egalitarian program of the French Revolution."[2]

Durkheim upheld the principles of 1789, but his own gender theory helped contain their universalist dynamic. In the American canonization of him, sociologists have almost completely overlooked the fact that gender plays a constitutive role in his theory of modern society. Kandal is an exception, but his recent treatment is too narrow and needs elaboration.[3]

1. Anna Pappritz, "Die Geschichte der Frauenbewegung in Frankreich," in Helene Lange and Gertrud Bäumer, eds., *Handbuch der Frauenbewegung* (Berlin: Moeser Verlag, 1901), p. 361.

2. Elisabeth Badinter, *The Unopposite Sex: The End of the Gender Battle*, trans. by Barbara Wright (New York: Harper and Row, 1989), p. 164.

3. Terry R. Kandal, *The Woman Question in Classical Sociological Theory* (Miami: Florida International University Press, 1988), pp. 79-88. After this essay had gone to press, I

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Kandal limits himself to a superficial summary of pertinent passages in *The Division of Labor* and *Suicide*, claiming that Durkheim's "ideas about the relations of men and women changed between the time" he published the two works — 1893 and 1897 — and that a greater sympathy for the plight of women in the latter must not be overlooked in any effort "to document sexism in the history of classical sociology."[4] In my view, both judgments are misleading. Durkheim changed not his views but his vantage point, from the relation between conjugal family and division of labor to that between suicide, marriage and divorce. If he showed some concern about the plight of women under restrictive divorce legislation, he was equally, if not more, worried that any liberalization of the divorce laws would raise the male suicide rate by weakening the conjugal fabric. After all, he perceived an "enormous increase in the number of voluntary deaths within a century," and this appeared to him "as a pathological phenomenon becoming daily a greater menace."[5]

If Auguste Comte, the ineffectual grandfather of sociology, was a powerless aspirant to sociocracy, Durkheim, the patriarch of academic sociology, became a very influential figure in the Third Republic's imposition of laicist moral education on the school and the nation. Scientific sociology was to be part of a new republican religion of humanity. Durkheim helped stabilize and defend the Republic against its enemies on the Right, but he also warded off feminist challenges to the bourgeois republic and the bourgeois neo-patriarchal family. (I say neo-patriarchal because Durkheim uses the term "patriarchal" for a vanished type of extended family, exemplified most clearly by ancient Rome.) Anti-Catholicism and anti-feminism became mixed. Durkheim accepted conventional bourgeois views of gender inequality, reinforced them with the pseudo-scientific arguments of physical anthropology, and elaborated a defensive ideology of unequal gender complementarity which was part and parcel of an evolutionary theory of organic solidarity. Gender differentiation was basic to his theory of organic solidarity.

This analysis will conclude with a comparison between Durkheim and Marianne Weber, the only woman and feminist writer he ever considered worthy of a lengthy critique. Durkheim, the salaried mandarin,

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found another recent treatment, Rosalind Ann Sydie, *Natural Women, Cultured Men: A Feminist Perspective on Sociological Theory* (New York: New York University Presss, 1987). Sydie's chapter on "Durkheim's 'Science' of Sociology and Sex-Role Differences" is far superior to Kandal's. I agree with most of Sydie's careful analysis, but approach Durkheim's gender theory more from the historical context than from his own sociological theory.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
5. Emile Durkheim, *Suicide* (New York: The Free Press, 1951), p. 370.

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and Marianne Weber, the capitalist rentier, combined conservative and liberal positions in contradictory ways that make a comparison illuminating. In crucial respects, Durkheim's theory of evolution denied the possibility of gender equality in modern society, whereas Marianne Weber's developmental theory affirmed it.[6]

Gender in the Wake of the French Revolution

Historians disagree about the Revolution's consequences. Can the rule of Reason bring about a more humane world or is it bound to turn into unreason, the Terror, the Gulag, the Holocaust, or the oppression of women? The French Revolution established the sacredness of the individual, as Durkheim recognized, but it also set up the guillotine for men and women. Yet he never discussed the Terror. Lynn Hunt has recently written a Durkheimian study of the Terror[7] where she points out that Marie Antoinette was guillotined after a pornographic campaign, and shortly thereafter women's political clubs were forbidden. Symbolically, a band of brothers committed parricide and matricide, and then excluded their sisters. Concretely, *fraternité* became the *levée en masse* in 1793. Women, so read the decree, were to stay at home sewing uniforms and nursing the wounded men. Mona Ozouf has discussed the exceedingly ambiguous notion of *fraternité* — the real trouble spot in the revolutionary triad.[8] There was a short period in which divorce by mutual consent was allowed, and illegitimate children were given some rights. But the revolutionary brothers were also patriarchal family heads, and after Thermidor deputies were even required to be married or widowed. Napoleon forbade the search for *paternité*, and decades later an anarchist such as Proudhon could still recognize no gender alternatives but

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6. The story has already been written of Marianne Weber and her circle in the German salons in which men and women first came together for intellectual exchange. So has the story of the battles for gender equality but against sexual liberation in the German women's movement, in which Marianne Weber played an important role as feminist author and finally as president of the German Women's Federation. (Even August Bebel cited her in later editions of *Women and Socialism*). See my introduction to Marianne Weber, *Max Weber: A Biography*, trans. by Harry Zohn (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1988), pp. xv-lx; see also Harry Liebersohn's review in *Telos*, no. 78 (Winter 1988/89), pp. 123-129. An expanded German version of my introduction appeared in Marianne Weber, *Max Weber. Ein Lebensbild* (Munich: Piper Verlag, 1989). pp. ix-lxxiii.

7. Lynn Hunt, "The Sacred and the French Revolution," in Jeffrey C. Alexander, ed., *Durkheimian Sociology: Cultural Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 25-43. Hunt is presently completing a study of the political pornography of the revolutionary period.

8. Mona Ozouf, "Fraternity," in François Furet and Mona Ozouf, eds., *A Critical*

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courtisane ou ménagère, harlot or housewife.[9]

The Revolution and its aftermath did produce an iconography in which female allegory was dominant. Personal rulers were replaced on seals and coins by impersonal female symbols; for instance, by *liberté* and *egalité* as virgins, protected by Hercules as *fraternité* — the man with the big stick.[10] Whereas the most famous allegory of the Revolution, Delacroix's "Liberty Leading the People" of 1830, was an armed Nike, by 1848 even *fraternité* had become a woman. As described by Etienne Thoré, together with Liberty and Equality, she tended the wounds of the martyred people with healing oils.[11]

If the allegories of Revolution and Republic elevated female symbols, they did not imply any female emancipation.[12] They were, however, paralleled by social theories, both socialist and sociological, that made novel forms of gender complementarity crucial for the organization of society, even if structured in an authoritarian manner. Gender became a central category for the Saint-Simonians, Comte and Fourier (as it did later for Engels and Bebel). In England some of the feminist implications buried deep within Comte's positivist system were taken up by Harriet Martineau, George Eliot and Henry Lewes, John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor (herself no admirer of Comte), and by Beatrice Webb, who started out as a Comtean. But in France there was, from the 1850s on, a backlash against radical feminism, especially the Saint-Simonian women's movement of 1848/49,[13] as well as against Comte's religion of humanity with its worship of the secular madonna Clotilde de Vaux. When Durkheim conceived of his academic sociology in the 1880s and 1890s, he resolutely pushed women off the public pedestal on which Enfantin and Comte had put them. Only at the very end of his 1895/96 lectures on Saint-Simonism did he mention the conflict that centered on the role of women and marriage. He charged that some of the Saint-Simonians had

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Dictionary of the French Revolution (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1989), trans. by Arthur Goldhammer, pp. 694-703.

9. See James F. McMillan, *Housewife or Harlot: The Place of Women in French Society 1870-1940* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), p. 2.

10. Cf. the discussion of the famous Dupré coin by Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 113f.

11. See T.J. Clark, *The Absolute Bourgeois: Artists and Politics in France 1848-1851* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 113.

12. The point that the use of female symbols does not necessarily accompany any improvement in women's status has recently been made, among others, by Marina Warner, *Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form* (New York: Atheneum, 1985).

13. See Claire Goldberg Moses, *French Feminism in the 19th Century* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1984).

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tried to elevate love over authority, sanctioning the passions openly — the great threat in Durkheim's moral universe: "With the erotomaniac there are no limits!" Taking the side of Bazard against Enfantin, Durkheim observed: "If Bazard — a cool and moderate intellect — resisted the germs of sensualist mysticism . . . Enfantin, a tumultuous and impassioned genius, relying more on heart than mind, had little inclination to share his leaning. . . . Bazard . . . demanded that women be treated as the equal of men in marriage. But Enfantin went much further, and his theory was hardly more than a sanction of free love — almost of sacred prostitution."[14]

Durkheim and Gender Theory

A Republican Durkheim should be distinguished from his bourgeois counterpart. The Republican embraces the principles of 1789 and their universalist implications, but the bourgeois elaborates an evolutionary theory that does not permit envisaging the political and social emancipation of women. In both roles, however, Durkheim remains ambivalent toward modernity, since "the entire morality of progress and perfection is . . . inseparable from a certain amount of anomy."[15]

At the time of the centenary of the French Revolution, Durkheim addressed "the principles of 1789 and sociology."[16] Sociology, he argued, can recognize the principles as positive social facts, as objects of faith, as secular religion, whereas most contemporary moralists and economists still view them as abstract social theory and turn them into an orthodoxy of intransigent individualism. Durkheim agreed (with Ferneuil, whose book, *The Principles of 1789 and Social Science*, he was reviewing) that the ideologists' "immoderate taste for the absolute" was dangerous. Yet he rooted the strength of the revolutionary faith not in dogmatics, but in the actual transformations of European society from traditionalism to modernity. Distancing himself from Saint-Simon and Comte, he added the

14. Emile Durkheim, *Socialism*, ed. by Alvin Gouldner, trans. by Charlotte Sattler (New York: Collier Publishers, 1962), pp. 240 and 281. Durkheim cites no evidence on Bazard's equal treatment. If he had gone on to lecture on Fourier, as he anticipated (on p. 244), he would have been forced to address gender issues explicitly. Marcel Mauss, the original editor, admits that he cut out some lectures, but does not reveal their content. He also remembers that Durkheim prepared a course on Proudhon in 1896/7 and intended to deal with Lassalle, but was diverted by founding *L'Année sociologique* in 1896 — an opportunity to promote sociology instead of writing on socialism.

15. Durkheim, *Suicide*, *op.cit.*, p. 364.

16. Durkheim, "The Principles of 1789 and Sociology" (1890), in Robert N. Bellah, ed., *Emile Durkheim on Morality and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), pp. 34-42.

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tactical disclaimer: "Sociology, like any science, studies what is and what has been, seeks laws, but is not interested in the future."[17] A decade later, however, he openly acknowledged his strategy for the political uses of sociology. In "Individualism and the Intellectuals" he took the side of the Dreyfusards, defending the religion of humanity as the national and international project of modernity.[18] In view of the structural changes of society, this religion was now the only one possible. Religion was necessary, but given evolutionary change, the religion of yesterday could not be the religion of tomorrow. The religion of humanity had everything needed to speak to its faithful in no less imperative tones than the religions it replaced. (This was aimed primarily at Catholicism, the political enemy, and perhaps even at Judaism.) In the individualist religion of humanity, man was at once the worshipper and god. The cult of man demanded the autonomy of reason and, as a primary rite, the pursuit of free inquiry. The religion of humanity was, however, also a collective force, brought about by the national concentration achieved by the revolutionaries, who promulgated the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizen. Since the very soul of the nation was now at stake, the principles of 1789 could not be disavowed without committing a veritable moral suicide. Violations of the religion of humanity could not remain unpunished without compromising national existence. Sociology could demonstrate that, with increasing social differentiation and individuation, the various groups in the country had nothing in common but their humanity. The highest value was the human person: *personne humaine*.

Logically, this universalist principle should include women. But Durkheim is silent on this score, and his social theory of modernity makes it clear that women must remain marginal to, if not excluded altogether from, active citizenship. His theory envisages a kind of social pyramid (to use one of the favorite revolutionary symbols) as the product of a long evolutionary process. (1) At the top is the unitary nation-state, which appeals beyond itself to all humanity. It makes liberty and equality human rights, and demands fraternity as a civic obligation for the sake of solidarity. Women are, however, formally excluded.[19] (2) Ideally, the intermediate level, economic and professional life, is organized along corporatist

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 41f.

18. Durkheim, "Individualism and the Intellectuals" (1898), in Bellah, *Emile Durkheim on Morality and Society*, *op.cit.*, pp. 43-57.

19. A matter-of-fact reference in Durkheim's posthumously published lectures on *Professional Ethics and Civil Morals* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1958) points to the denial of suffrage to children, adolescents and women (p. 78).

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lines. A multitude of "professional groups" is supposed to embody organic solidarity and take over some of the motivations and tasks of the shrunken family. Although millions of women were in the French non-agricultural workforce, Durkheim does not deal with them despite his notion of gender-specific vocation. (3) Women cannot avoid appearing on the lowest level, the millions of conjugal families. Conjugal solidarity is the bedrock of organic solidarity; it is not based on the attraction of like for like, as in the earlier periods of mechanical solidarity. Durkheim's ideal of gender relations is one of unequal complementarity. It domesticates gender.

Central to Durkheim's theory of modernity is *The Division of Social Labor: A Study on the Organization of Superior Societies* (1893).[20] He wrote it not only under the impact of the early anticlerical educational reforms but also after the introduction of limited divorce in 1884. His largely negative reaction to feminism entered into the composition of the work. Rhetorically, Durkheim liked to disclaim that he was a conservative, reactionary or bourgeois prude,[21] who obstinately opposed sex education or divorce, but the weight of his arguments regularly favors the conservative advocacy of very slow, gradualist reform. Although he made few direct remarks about feminism, at best he tried to slow down its advance; at worst he condemned it. Feminism was for him "an unconscious (*inconscient*) movement [that] without doubt deceives itself when it formulates the details of its demands. But it is not to be implied that the movement is a short-lived vogue. Nonetheless, it is quite true that woman should seek for equality in the functions that are commensurate with her nature," he observed in a brief review of an anti-feminist tract by Anna Lampérière.[22] In the same year, 1900, he reviewed a feminist work by the Spanish writer Adolfo Posada, reporting as the author's personal view "that the physiological inferiority of the woman and

20. There are two translations under the title *The Division of Labor in Society*, one by George Simpson (New York: The Free Press, 1964; originally 1933) and one by W. D. Halls (New York: The Free Press, 1984). Less literal than the first translation, the second manages to destroy some of Durkheim's precise terminology. "*La société conjugale*" appears in Simpson correctly as "conjugal family" (p. 56), but in Halls as "marital relationships" (p. 17), thus wiping out Durkheim's term for the modern type of family.

21. See, for example, Durkheim's 1911 remarks on sex education in W.S.F. Pickering, ed., and H.L. Sutcliffe, trans., *Durkheim: Essays on Morals and Education* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 143.

22. Review of Anna Lampérière, *Le role sociale de la femme. Devoirs, droits, education* (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1898) in *L'Année sociologique*, Vol. 3 (1900), pp. 390f., trans. and ed. by Yash Nandan, *Emile Durkheim: Contributions to* L'Année Sociologique (New York: The Free Press, 1980), p. 296.

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her lack of intellectual aptitudes are not attributes given to her by all scholars." But as against Posada's view that there is not a single branch of human activity in which women have not excelled, Durkheim, convinced of women's physiological inferiority, charged that the author did not go beyond generalities and had "not examined or discussed in detail the reasons why certain thinkers — among them some women, like Mme. Laura Marholm — have argued against the feminist movement."[23]

At the end of his study on suicide, Durkheim addressed directly "the champions of equal rights for woman . . . They forget that the work of centuries cannot be instantly abolished; that juridical equality cannot be legitimate so long as psychological inequality is so flagrant. Our efforts must be bent to reduce the latter." But his goal was to make the conjugal bond harder to dissolve in order to reduce the suicide rate: "For man and woman to be equally protected by the same institution, they must first of all be creatures of the same nature. Only then will the indissolubility of the conjugal bond no longer be accused of serving only one of the two parties pleading."[24] Doubtless, this is a statement of good intentions, but how can women and men become "creatures of the same nature" when this appears impossible in view of the basic theory set forth in *The Division of Labor* and never retracted?

Sociologists have largely ignored the striking fact (and even Kandal passes over it in one sentence) that Durkheim began his second dissertation (*these d'état*) not only with a glorification of conjugal solidarity but with an ostentatious denigration of feminine physiology — and that shortly after his marriage to Louise Dreyfus in 1887.[25] At a time when

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23. Review of Adolfo Posada, *Feminismo* (Madrid: Fe, 1899) in *L'Année sociologique*, *op.cit.*, p. 391; cf. the English trans. in Nandan, *Emile Durkheim*, *op. cit.* pp. 252f. It turns out that Marholm, the pen name of Laura Hansson (born 1854), was a satirical antifeminist polemicist, author of *Das Buch der Frauen* (1891) and of *Zur Psychologie der Frau* (1903).

24. Durkheim, *Suicide*, *op. cit.*, p. 386.

25. We will never know, it seems, what Mme. Durkheim thought of her husband's views, or even whether or when she became aware of them. Compared to Marianne Weber, who put herself prominently next to her husband in her famous biography, Louise Durkheim remains practically invisible to us. Although Steven Lukes tried hard, he could not find much to report about her. In his massive biography she appears on only one page out of 650. See Steven Lukes, *Emile Durkheim: His Life and Work* (New York: Penguin Books, 1973). Lukes quotes Marcel Mauss to the effect that Mme. Durkheim created for her husband "the respectable and quiet familial existence which he considered the best guarantee of morality and of life. She removed from him every material care and all frivolity, and for his sake took charge of the education of Marie and André Durkheim. . . . [My aunt] was a saint and — she was cheerful as well. My uncle made her lead a life that was more than austere, but she led it with gaiety" (p. 99). More information on Durkheim's parents, his childhood and the attitudes of his daughter Marie and her

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men like Havelock Ellis began to recognize the sham of craniology,[26] Durkheim emphasized the "scientific fact" that only men's not women's brains had partaken in evolution. He cited French authorities such as Paul Broca, founder of the Anthropological Society and the prestigious *Revue d'anthropologie* and its co-editor, Paul Topinard, as well as the German anthropologists Theodor Waitz and Theodor Bischoff. Durkheim was especially impressed with Gustave Le Bon, who had been "able to establish directly and with mathematical precision" that (he quotes him at length) "the volume of the crania of man and woman . . . show considerable differences in favor of the man, and this inequality grows proportionately with civilization, so that from the point of view of the mass of the brain, and correspondingly of intelligence, woman tends more and more to be differentiated from the male sex. The difference which exists, for example, between the average cranium of Parisian men of the present day and that of Parisian women is almost double that observed between male and female of ancient Egypt."[27] Here as elsewhere in *The Division of Labor* Durkheim succumbed to crude scientific materialism, but this tendency was particularly pronounced in his treatment of gender.

In fact, Durkheim did not have to resort to physical anthropology to advance his theory that, with increasing social differentiation, human beings become more interdependent and therefore capable of organic solidarity based on difference. In his eagerness to reject utilitarian

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children toward him has recently been revealed in Stjepan G. Mestrovic, *Emile Durkheim and the Reformation of Sociology* (Totowa, NJ: Roman & Littlefield, 1988). At various points Mestrovic takes issue with Lukes' state of information.

26. See Cynthia E. Russett, *Sexual Science: The Victorian Construction of Womanhood* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 36 and 164.

27. Durkheim, *The Division of Labor* (Simpson tr.), *op.cit.*, pp. 57f. Durkheim quotes from Gustave Le Bon, *L'Homme et les sociétés* (Paris: Rothschild, 1881), Vol. II, p. 134. Curiously, Steven Lukes claims that "Durkheim would have been the last person to regard Le Bon as a serious social scientist. . . . I can find no basis for Mary Douglas's suggestion that Durkheim 'seems to have freely drawn upon' Le Bon's theory of crowd psychology" (p. 462, n. 54). Whether or not Durkheim made use of Le Bon's *Psychologie des foules* (1895), he most certainly took Le Bon very seriously here. In his 1881 work, Le Bon (misspelled Lebon in both the French and English text of *The Division of Labor*) also discussed the future of religion. Like Durkheim, but more cynically, he considered religious urges ineradicable, but religions fated to succeed one another. He viewed the ongoing construction of Sacre-Coeur atop the Montmartre as a last gasp of the old religion in the form of a cult "founded long ago by a miserable girl, who was hysterical, hallucinatory, and mad." (The reference is to the Visitandine nun and Novice Mistress Margaret Mary Alacoque [1674-1690], beatified in 1864 and canonized in 1920). This relapse could not, however, prevent the triumph of the new religion: "*Une divinité supérieure, nommée Progrès, et d'autres divinités accessoires, telles que l'Humanité, la Liberté, la Fraternité, l'Egalité, conduiront l'homme au bonheur*" (pp. 341f.).

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theories of the division of labor, he claimed that its true function was to create in two or more persons a feeling of solidarity. He briefly mentioned friendship, having himself experienced strong male bonding in the Ecole Normale Supérieure, which he attended from 1879 to 1882 (from age 21 to 24). One of his closest friends there, we recall, was Victor Hommay, whose suicide in 1886 deeply affected Durkheim and may have contributed to his vast overestimation of the social significance of suicide.[28]

In contrast to friendship, Durkheim elaborated his second example, conjugal society. He celebrated unequal difference and considered gender resemblance a primitive stage left behind by the evolution of superior societies. It is not resemblance but difference in nature that unites the couple. "The sexual division of labor is the source of conjugal solidarity . . . the separation of the sexes an event of tremendous importance in the evolution of the emotions."[29] Primitive society had not known "one of the distinctive contemporary qualities of woman, gentility (*douceur*)." Political participation was a primitive feature: "There are even now a very great number of savage peoples, where the woman mingles in political life." (So much for Geraldine Ferraro, whom a feminist campaign poster in 1986 pictured as Delacroix's Liberty.) Small wonder, then, that for Durkheim "today, among cultivated people, the woman leads a completely different existence from that of man. One might say that the two great functions of the psychic life are thus dissociated, that one of the sexes takes care of the affective functions and the other of intellectual functions."

Since this division of functions made women and men more interdependent than in earlier times, Durkheim feared the effects of "liberal" divorce legislation, as it was much discussed at the time. "Permit the sexual division of labor to recede below a certain level and conjugal society would eventually subsist in sexual relations preeminently ephemeral" — the situation in the US today would appear to Durkheim as a relapse into savagery. The solidarity created in the conjugal family was exemplary for "the establishment of a social and moral order *sui generis*," indeed for society-at-large. Durkheim suggested that women could partake in this manner in larger social life. He was confronted by "the fact that in certain classes women participate in artistic and literary life just as men," but he hastened to add that this did not mean "that the occupations of

28. See Steven Lukes, *Emile Durkheim*, *op. cit.*, pp. 49ff. and 191.

29. Durkheim, *The Division of Labor*, *op.cit.*, p. 56, Quotations in this and the next paragraph are from pp. 56-60.

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the two sexes are becoming homogeneous. . . . [E]ven in this sphere of action, woman carries out her own nature, and her role is very specialized, very different from that of man." Durkheim was willing to cede to women the affective and esthetic functions in society. "If art and letters begin to become feminine tasks, the other sex seems to permit it in order to give itself more specially to the pursuit of science," and that means, of course, also sociology.

Durkheim pursued this suggestion again in *Suicide*, a topic on which he published and lectured as early as 1888-90, during the writing of *The Division of Labor*. Now he treated gender relations not in terms of the beneficent evolution of the division of labor, but in terms of the structural gender antagonism created by modern marriage, which the state controlled much more strictly than the church had done in the past (when it had been too lax for Durkheim's taste). The basic gender thesis of *Suicide* is that marriage provides a greater structural protection for husbands than for wives, especially childless ones. His thesis was, in turn, related to his view of the separate female and male natures. Men need restraint; women need liberty. For Durkheim, every male is a potential Don Juan. Unmarried men are at risk of succumbing to the "morbid desire for the infinite." Marriage, defined as "a regulation of sexual relations," offers the male "salutary discipline" and "moral equilibrium": "The function of marriage is to completely regulate the life of passion, and monogamous marriage more strictly than any other. By forcing a man to attach himself forever to the same woman, it assigns a strictly definite object to the need for love, and closes the horizon."[30]

By contrast, woman has not only "rudimentary sensibility" and is "less impregnated with sociability," but her "sexual needs have less of a mental character because, generally speaking, her mental life is less developed. These needs are more closely related to the needs of the organism . . . and consequently find in them an efficient restraint. . . . She does not require so strict a social regulation as marriage, and particularly monogamous marriage. . . . Consequently, everything that makes it more flexible and lighter can only better the wife's situation. So divorce protects her."[31] This even leads Durkheim to ask himself: "Must one of the sexes be necessarily sacrificed?"[32] The question troubles him, because easing divorce weakens the family's regulatory power and thus creates conjugal anomy.

30. Durkheim, *Suicide*, *op. cit.*, pp. 270f.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 215 and 272.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 384.

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In the last chapter of *Suicide*, Durkheim proposed a solution to the structural unfairness of marriage to women, but not before having made it plain that "man is not naturally a wicked and egoistic being whose role in a household is to make his companion suffer."[33] He emphasized that "the female sex will not again become more similar to the male; we may foresee that it will become more different. But these differences will become of greater social use than in the past." Then he asked again: "Why, for instance, should not esthetic functions become woman's [functions], as man, more and more absorbed by functions of utility, has to renounce them?" Again, Durkheim resorted to a utilitarian argument on the collective level at the same time that he saw males specializing increasingly in "the function of utility." The benefit would consist in both sexes approximating "each other by their very differences. They would be socially equalized but in different ways. Evolution does seem to be taking place in this direction."[34]

Evolution had, however, also weakened the family of old, in which men had labored to increase their patrimony. Properly protected against all but the most exigent divorce, the conjugal family of husband and wife could remain an idyl of organic solidarity, but it was too small to motivate men to exert themselves. Domestic duty had to be replaced by professional duty. As early as 1892, at the conclusion of his course on the family, Durkheim welcomed the new elite of civil servants, soldiers and scholars, and championed his version of corporatism. (The famous 1902 preface to the second edition of *The Division of Labor*, on the *groupements professionnels*, was no afterthought.)

Yet offering women entry into the professional world does not remove unequal complementarity. Durkheim's evaluation of the place of esthetics in secondary education and culture-at-large emerges from

33. *Ibid.*, p. 274.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 385. In the first issue of *L'Année sociologique* (1897/98), Durkheim supplemented his evolutionary defense of gender differentiation. At the end of his famous essay on "La Prohibition de l'inceste," he traced modern gender differentiation back to primeval views: "This gross superstition, which caused man to attribute to blood all sorts of supernatural characteristics, has had a considerable influence on the moral development of humanity. . . . There is no doubt that, by an inexplicable routine, we still obey these ancient prejudices, so long deprived of any reason for being, without accounting for them to ourselves. . . . The mystery with which, right or wrong, we like to surround the woman, this unknown that each sex is for the other and which perhaps imparts the principal charm to their relationship . . . all this would be difficult to maintain if men and women mingled their lives more completely; and that is why my opinion is resistant to the innovators who would like to put an end to this dualism." (*Incest. The Nature and Origin of the Taboo*, trans. by Edward Sagarin [New York: Lyle Stuart, 1963], pp. 112ff.).

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the last lecture of his course on moral education that he gave at the Sorbonne in 1902/3 — a topic already taught at Bordeaux and repeated again in Paris. He sets up a rigid distinction between esthetics as the realm of the unreal and irresponsible, and science and ethics — both sides of the same coin — as the sphere of the real and the moral. Art conveys neither "precepts nor concepts, but images." Whereas concepts are "the product of a severely regulated scientific elaboration . . . the artist's world is the world of images, and the world of images is the world of dreams, of untrammeled mental play. From this point of view, there is genuine opposition between art and ethics." Moreover — and crucially — "the realm of art diverges from that of moral life since it departs from reality." Durkheim disapproved of a "wholly artistic education," since it all too often induced "some men to elaborate ideas and ideals which they contemplate with affection and indolence, instead of energetically participating in the common life."[35] A passage from *Suicide* illustrates Durkheim's well-known antipathy toward the Parisian *bohème*: "The anarchist, the esthete, the mystic, the socialist revolutionary, even if they do not despair of the future, have in common with the pessimist a single sentiment of hatred and disgust for the existing order, a single craving to destroy or to escape from reality."[36]

In these contexts Durkheim does not mention women, but since he anticipates a growing esthetic function for them, he puts them in rather questionable company. Since he expects even greater gender differentiation, women would end up using their imagination, whereas men concentrate on the hard work of studying reality and acting morally upon it. Thus Durkheim subscribes to a version of the "feminization of culture." Matters are not improved by the only function that art should have for men in Durkheim's eyes; it helps them to relax from work in a manner that prevents morally dangerous idleness.

Durkheim's views on gender should be seen in relation to the Third Republic's efforts to impose a laicist education and to reduce the moral and educational influence of the Catholic Church and its teaching orders. Laicist education was intended to replace the morality that until then had "only existed in religious guise."[37] Paradoxically, the Republic's partisans opposed women's suffrage not least for the reason that women, "fundamentally traditionalist by nature,"[38] were expected

35. Durkheim, *Moral Education*, ed. and trans. by Everett K. Wilson (New York: The Free Press, 1961), pp. 270ff.
36. Durkheim, *Suicide*, *op.cit.*, p. 370.
37. Durkheim, *Moral Education*, *op.cit.*, p. 20.
38. Durkheim, *Suicide*, *op.cit.*, p. 166.

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to vote disproportionately for Catholic causes, but the laicists favored, at least in principle, better educational opportunities for girls and young women in the hope that it would make them less subject to the Church's influence. There is political logic to Durkheim's position, which deprives women of a significant role in moral life not only on the higher levels of esthetics but also on the elementary level of child-rearing. Here he differs radically from Comte, who had extolled mothers and wives as educators of the male.

It is well-known that Durkheim was called to the Sorbonne in 1902 to play a major part in setting up courses in moral education that became obligatory for all secondary teachers in France. He approved not only of marriage as a modern form of regulation by the secular state, but also of "the family now becoming an agency secondary to the state."[39] Therefore, he attacked "the all too popular notion that moral education falls chiefly within the jurisdiction of the family. I judge that the task of the school in the moral development of the child can and should be of the greatest importance."[40] Only obliquely did Durkheim acknowledge the conflict that persisted among many parents and teachers. It cannot surprise us, then, that he hardly ever mentions mothers.[41] They do not appear in his lecture on "Discipline and the Psychology of the Child" (ch. 9 of *Moral Education*) and not even in his encyclopedia article on childhood (with F. Buisson), *Nouveau Dictionaire de pédagogie* (1911).[42] Mothers remain subordinate to the mostly male teachers, who impose authoritatively the state's new religion of humanity. The number of female primary schoolteachers did increase very gradually before WWI, when women suddenly became indispensable "manpower," but they were treated very poorly by the state administration and had to endure much prejudice from parents.[43]

Durkheim's Encounter with Marianne Weber

Durkheim held his position on gender, marriage and divorce throughout his career. He looked to history for evidence of imperceptible change, if not invariance, and was always quick to turn the weight of the past against the possibilities of the future. If an institution, such as

39. Durkheim, *Moral Education*, *op. cit.*, p. 75.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
41. The fact that Durkheim relied on his wife to take care of the upbringing of his children appears to me not inconsistent with his political position, since he exercised patriarchal supervision over his own household.
42. English in Pickering, *op.cit.*, pp. 149-154.
43. See McMillan, *op.cit.*, pp. 54f.

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incest, appeared to be universal, its existence in the present was justified. The purpose of teaching history was to inculcate patience and a sense of complexity in young people. As an upholder of the principles of 1789 (as he understood them), Durkheim reconciled the epochal event of the Revolution with his philosophy of history by submerging it into the *longue durée* of France: "In order to secure loyalty to the ideas that found their expression at the end of the last century, we need not present them as a sort of unintelligible improvisation. Are they not, on the contrary, clothed with more authority if we show that they were actually the natural product of everything that went on before? . . . The glory of the men of the Revolution would not be diminished in this way."[44] Durkheim never mentions the women of the Revolution.

Given the specific direction of his interests, Durkheim read voraciously in the comparative history of the family, marriage and sexual morality, and closely followed the English, French, German, Italian and Spanish literature. His reviews in *L'Année sociologique*, amounting to more than a hundred pages, cover everything from earliest history to recent legal developments. It is not surprising that he also encountered Marianne Weber's massive *Wife and Mother in Legal Development* (1907), which ranged from the issue of primordial matriarchy to the latest controversies inside and outside the women's movement on free love and divorce by mutual consent.[45]

Durkheim and Marianne Weber were both ethical rigorists with deep roots in Kantian philosophy, although not adherents of Kant's particular theory of marriage as a contract for the mutual enjoyment of one's sexual organs. Durkheim polemicized against Kant's theory of conjugal society in the introduction to the first edition of *The Division of Labor*.[46] His views appear to be strikingly close to Hegel's notion of "ethico-legal love," but he does not seem to have been familiar with this part of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*.[47] In general, however, Durkheim's

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44. Durkheim, *Moral Education*, *op.cit.*, p. 277.

45. Marianne Weber, *Ehefrau und Mutter in der Rechtsentwicklung* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1907; reprint, Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1971). Durkheim's review appeared in *L'Année sociologique*, vol. 11 (1910), pp. 363-369. English translations in Nandan, *op.cit.*, pp. 285-289 and in Mark Traugott, ed. and trans., *Emile Durkheim on Institutional Analysis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 139-144.

46. Durkheim omitted long passages in the second edition, but Simpson considered them so important that he appended them to his translation (pp. 411-436). They are found neither in the eighth French edition of 1967 nor in the Halls' translation of 1984.

47. I recognize this proximity from Carole Pateman's critique of Kant and Hegel in *The Sexual Contract* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), pp. 168-176. Pateman refers in passing (p. 175) to a passage in *The Division of Labor* in which Durkheim asserts, like

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sociology can be read as an ambitious effort to find a social anchor for Kant's categorical imperative. Being interested in the collectivist impulses deriving from seemingly individualist doctrines, he observed that "Kantianism gave rise to the ethics of Fichte, which are already quite impregnated with socialism, and the philosophy of Hegel, of whom Marx was the disciple."[48] It so happens that Marianne Weber's first book was a study of the ultimate ethical assumptions of Fichte's socialism and Marx's doctrine.[49] But only in 1907, in her second book and in a speech against the new ethic of sexual liberation, did she emerge as spokeswoman for a conservative sexual ethic.

There was much common ground between the two thinkers. As early as 1892, Durkheim declared "free, unregulated union . . . an immoral society. And that is why children reared in such environments show so many moral defects." Moreover, since the family is regulated by the state, "free union undermines public order."[50] In his review, Durkheim lauded Marianne Weber for being "prudently conservative in outlook," since she rejected free unions and purely contractual marriage. They also agreed on the desirability of scientific sex education for both sexes, as long as morality dictated hygiene. Both vigorously opposed the naturalistic approach, mostly advocated by freethinking medical doctors, for whom sexual intercourse was "on a par with digestion and circulation."[51] Durkheim appealed again to history, arguing that sexual intercourse always had been, and therefore always should remain, a *mysterium*, whereas Marianne Weber considered birth control a "sin against the cosmic meaning of sexual love," albeit unavoidable in some circumstances.[52] Although both wanted sexual relations to be supremely ethical, an important difference emerged. For Durkheim, the very purpose of sex education was to convince the young man "that the state of marriage is justified in law and that extramarital sexual intercourse is immoral."[53] It was enough "just to say no";

Hegel, that a contract presupposes something beyond itself, but she does not take note of Durkheim's theory of marriage and conjugal family.

48. See "Individualism and the Intellectuals," in Bellah, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

49. Marianne Weber, *Fichtes Sozialismus und sein Verhältnis zur Marxschen Doktrin* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1900; reprint, Hildesheim: Fichteana, 1987).

50. Emile Durkheim, "The Conjugal Family," trans. by George Simpson, in *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 70. No. 5 (1965), p. 536.

51. Durkheim in Pickering, *op.cit.*, p. 143.

52. Marianne Weber, "Die Formkräfte des Geschlechtslebens" (1918), in Marianne Weber, *Frauenfragen und Frauengedanken* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1919), p. 209.

53. Durkheim in Pickering, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

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there was no need for an institutional adjustment. Marianne Weber took a more realistic position. In view of the fact that young professional men married very late and that their future wives had to wait many years, she urged early marriage with the possibility of divorce by mutual consent. In this way, she hoped, young men would be less likely to visit prostitutes. Divorce by mutual consent could remedy mistakes in the choice of a partner that were due to youthful inexperience.

Thus their very ethical rigorism brought Durkheim and Marianne Weber on a collision course, and nowhere so sharply as in the evaluation of the blessings of patriarchalism. "Let us state once more our case," Marianne Weber wrote, "against the ideal of patriarchalism, which gave birth to our marriage laws, by summarizing the general ethical and psychological consequences that must result for the woman and conjugal life if the husband indeed exercises his legal authority over her person and property, and thus makes dominance his duty, yet often without the magnanimity demanded by Fichte. . . . [Subordination] diminishes not only the woman's happiness but also the ethical value of the conjugal relationship. . . . If, according to the authority principle, the husband's subjective wishes become orders, the wife has not much left to offer him out of 'free love'."[54]

In his retort, Durkheim went so far as to defend even the old patriarchal family, which in his typological scheme preceded the modern conjugal family — a distinction that Marianne Weber did not maintain: "Her whole theory rests on the premise that the patriarchal family has brought about the woman's complete subservience. Now, formulated so categorically, the assertion is wide open to question. To be sure, such a domestic regime has given rise to woman's legal status as a minor in civil life. But from another perspective, since in this same type of family domestic life is much more intense and more important than in previous types . . . the moral position of the wife and mother has been enlarged."[55]

In the end, Durkheim turned his critique of Marianne Weber's views on patriarchalism and divorce into an all-out defense of "*la femme au foyer.*" At previous occasions he had taken to task Alfred Valensi (1906), Paul and Victor Margueritte (1906) and Auguste Rol (1907), together with politicians and judges who shared their relatively liberal views on divorce.[56]

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54. Marianne Weber, *Ehefrau und Mutter*, *op. cit.*, pp. 495f.
55. Durkheim in Nandan, *op. cit.*, p. 288.
56. See Durkheim's review of Valensi in Nandan, *op. cit.*, pp. 427-432; on P. and D. Margueritte, see "Divorce by Mutual Consent," in Traugott, *op. cit.*, pp. 240ff; on Rol, see the review in Nandan, *op.cit.*, pp. 283f.

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Perhaps because Marianne Weber was an outspoken feminist, Durkheim made an extra effort to put her in her place: "In the name of the moral individualism to which she appeals, she asks that it be possible to dissolve marriages simply by the will of the parties, when confirmed and duly declared." But her demand for "total legal equalization of wife and husband" would eliminate the "feminine grandeur," the very legacy of patriarchalism: "The respect shown woman, a respect that has increased over time, has it origin, in large part, in the religious respect that the hearth inspires." Durkheim foresaw correctly some consequences of easy divorce, and anticipated the present-day situation: "If the family were henceforth considered only as a precarious union of two beings who could at any moment separate if they wished to, and who, as long as the association lasted, each had their own circle of interests and preoccupations, it would be difficult for this religion to survive." But his conclusion does not follow: "And woman would thereby be diminished." Durkheim acknowledged that her loss in one respect would seem her gain in another, as a result of the more considerable role she would play in civil life, but he insisted on "the fact . . . that the gains she will derive from the acquisition of the rights claimed in her behalf will be offset by important losses."[57]

Pointing to losses rather than gains was Durkheim's last word on the subject of gender. The evolutionary differentiation of society and woman's lack of physical evolution required the enshrinement of unequal complementarity. Hence, at the bottom of the social pyramid the religion of the hearth should continue to be the ideal, as some sort of compensation for woman's congenital inferiority and civic exclusion. The increasing participation of women at the intermediate level could not change the basic constellation. If in the course of evolution women would fulfill more of the esthetic functions and men more the ethico-scientific ones, this would only perpetuate unequal gender complementarity. The state represented the universalist religion of humanity, which knew only the human person, but was in fact as little gender-neutral as were the two lower levels, since it categorically excluded women from equal participation. Thus Durkheim saw no way to reconcile the antinomies of universalism and particularism in modernity, and to extend the principles of 1789 to "the female half of humanity."

57. Durkheim in Traugott, *op. cit.*, p. 144; and Nandan, *op. cit.*, pp. 287f. (translations revised).

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*Eros and Culture: Gender Theory in Simmel, Tönnies and Weber**

Klaus Lichtblau

When the "founding fathers" of German sociology set about to create a theory of cultural modernity, they treated gender as crucially important. At the same time, their work reflected the contemporary tendency to articulate the cultural crisis of the age as a gender problem. German sociology, which understood itself mostly as a *Kulturwissenschaft*, and the bourgeois women's movement mutually influenced each other. In fact, there were close personal contacts between male sociologists and leading figures in the women's movement.

In the period before WWI, two gender issues in particular were much discussed in both circles: the gender-specific character of all social conditions and all "objective culture," and the significance of eroticism and sexual love in relation to marriage and culture-at-large. In time, both perspectives coalesced into a critical position for which the history of occidental culture appeared as a form of domination shaped by patriarchalism and æsceticism. In this context, the gender problem attained the dimensions of a cultural revolution that was partly linked to the emancipatory demands of the labor movement, but ultimately went beyond them. Friedrich Engels and August Bebel anticipated the revolutionary potential of the gender issue and atempted to combine the critique of patriarchalism with the Marxian critique of the capitalist mode of production. For them, the outcome of the struggle

* Translated by Guenther Roth. The German original will appear in Ilona Ostner and Klaus Lichtblau, eds., *Kultur-Wissenschaft-Frauenforschung* (Frankfurt a/M: Campus Verlag, 1990).

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against the social repression of women and against a repressive sexual morality would depend on the success of the battle against private property, which constituted the historical and logical foundation of the present gender relation. The notion of the prehistoric existence of a social order based on mother right (*Mutterrecht*), as it was advanced by Johann Jacob Bachofen and Lewis Henry Morgan, aided not only the socialist critics of bourgeois society but also gained, reinforced by Nietzsche and Freud, explosive force in various circles of the intellectual and artistic avant garde. The Dionysian exaltation of the vision of a new culture that rests again on mother right was not only hostile to every patriarchal order but repudiated, in its profoundly anti-modernist thrust, every form of rationalism and intellectualism, including those elements on which the socialist critique of society relied. In its more attenuated form, this movement resulted in an ethical and esthetic individualism that cultivated individual lifestyles and aimed at enthroning sexual love as the dominant cultural force. In the flourishing literature on sexual science, sexual ethics and eroticism, the phenomenon of sexual love appeared as a crucial symbol that reflected the cultural distinctiveness of modernity.

In a critical vein, Gertrud Bäumer, one of the most influential leaders, observed in 1904: "A sensual and artistic historical epoch that desires to experience the intoxicating power of all natural drives is dawning. People have become attuned to the vibrations of the sensual energies in the balance of pleasure and pain. Eroticism has become vitally important. Ellen Key goes so far as to claim that love is for people in the present what religion was in the past. Love becomes the object of a restless interest that drags all its mystical secrets into the limelight . . . and multiplies its power through ever greater auto-suggestion."[1] For women like Bäumer, the glorification of eroticism appeared as an exaggeration which undercut the theoretical and literary expression of this life experience. "The first female enthusiasts for the rights of man," she continued, "held womanhood in almost ascetic disdain. But today we encounter a mood for which all *Weltschmerz*, all dissatisfaction with life, is attributed to unfulfilled erotic desires. Ricarda Huch is right in her essay on Gottfried Keller that people are overestimating the importance of love. 'In modern life as in modern art love occupies too much space, and this is one of the most important causes of the sickliness and weakness of our time'."[2]

I shall not discuss the degree to which these and similar manifestations

1. Gertrud Bäumer, *Die Frau in der Kulturbewegung der Gegenwart* (Wiesbaden: Bergmann Verlag, 1904), pp. 5f.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

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of *Kulturpessimismus* might have some empirical plausibility, but I would like to examine instead the ways in which the articulation of the crisis of culture in gender terms appeared in the works of some influential sociologists. My purpose is threefold:

First, to show how Georg Simmel and Ferdinand Tönnies analyzed various "objectifications" of Western culture in gender terms. Simmel's writings, in particular, delineate in paradigmatic fashion the vantage point from which it becomes meaningful to ask whether a genuine "female culture" is possible at all *vis-à-vis* a dominant "objective culture" that has been shaped by a "male principle." His work is also of exemplary importance in that it allows us to identify antinomies that must necessarily emerge out of a dualistic gender metaphysics.

Second, to deal with Max Weber's views on the significance of the erotic sphere as a genuine "subjective culture," i.e., a form of subjective experience in a "disenchanted" world that is in the grip of instrumental rationality. The erotic relation of the sexes can be viewed as an example for the place of a strictly esthetic and expressive lifestyle in the pluralistic model of cultural modernity. I would like to suggest that within the framework of a "polytheism of values" the antinomies of dualist gender metaphysics can be avoided, without abandoning simultaneously the critical and utopian dimension of the gender problem.

Third, to treat Simmel's project of a "sociological aesthetics," which harks back to the idealist theory of autonomous aesthetics. This will allow me to confront the fragmentary character of cognition as it is postulated by the Neokantian theory of value-spheres with the idea of "reconciling" nature and culture through the erotic relations of the sexes. Simmel's inquiry into "sociality" and "coquetry" can illustrate how the different experiences of modernity in the various spheres can be related in such a way that a "purely formal" unity is at least conceivable on the symbolic level.

Objective Culture

In his time, Simmel belonged to those sociologists and philosophers who dealt most intensively with gender issues. After 1890 a number of his essays and articles treated the social position of women in the past and present, dealing with such themes as sexual relations within and without the family, women's position in militarist societies, and the role of money in gender relations. Beginning in 1902, he investigated the possibility of a genuinely female culture, a topic that should be seen against the background of the first edition of *The Philosophy of Money*

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(1900). By the time *Philsophical Culture* (1911), a collection of essays, appeared, female culture had become a central component of his *Kulturkritik*. After 1907 Simmel paid particular attention to sexual love, a theme that remained important in his later writings on *Lebensphilosophie*. The essays written over a quarter of a century covered almost all the topics that also preoccupied the bourgeois women's movement up until the seizure of power by National Socialism in 1933.

Before Simmel, Tönnies prefigured a theory of gender differentiation and polarization in *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (1887). His sociological theory of culture described the genesis and distinctiveness of occidental rationalism as well as the central contradictions of modernity within the context of a dualist gender metaphysics.[3] After the second edition of 1912, Tönnies' *magnum opus* exerted a strong influence on the German youth movement, and in the ideological struggles of the 1920s it played an important role in defining the political semantics of various groups.[4] For our theme, however, Simmel remains more pertinent. His theory of socio-cultural evolution and gender differentiation proceeds from the thesis that all of modern culture, which rests on occidental rationalism and intellectualism, has been molded in a very one-sided fashion by a "male principle."[5] Socio-cultural evolution, according to Simmel, results from processes of differentiation, the movement from an undifferentiated unity via a differentiated manifold to a differentiated unity (Spencer). Therefore, the different character of the two genders must be explained from their position in these developmental processes. The modern money economy and the industrial mode of production separated the traditional household economy from market-oriented production, and this "exacerbated the division of labor between the sexes."[6] Since women had remained confined to the household until the most recent past, only the males had taken part in rationalization and intellectualization. Male predominance in the social division of labor and the public sphere had the effect of equating the particular male features that shaped the image of modern man with the general characteristics of the human species.

3. See Bärbel Meurer, "Die Frau in 'Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft'," and Michael T. Greven, "Geschlechterpolarität und Theorie der Weiblichkeit," in Lars Clausen and Carsten Schlüter, eds., *Hundert Jahre 'Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft'* (Opladen: Leske Verlag, 1990).

4. See René König, *Soziologie in Deutschland* (Munich: Hanser Verlag, 1987), pp. 242ff.

5. See Georg Simmel, "Weibliche Kultur" (1902), *Schriften zur Philosophie und Soziologie der Geschlechter*, Heinz-Jürgen Dahme and Klaus Christian Köhnke, eds. (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1985), pp. 159ff.

6. Simmel, *Schriften*, *op. cit.*, p. 144 (hereafter cited as *Schriften*).

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Individualism, rationalism, objectivism, social differentiation and division of labor, modern professionalism and specialization, as well as the separation of "subjective" and "objective" culture concerned in essence only men, and thus led to the problematic identification of male and human. Since males are more of a social product than women, they must also be understood less as sexual beings in a naturalist sense. Man is much more an "individual" than a "gender type."[7]

If the individuality and abstract personality of the male is the product of social differentiation, the female appears, according to Simmel, as an undifferentiated being. Because of her "lower" position in evolution and her reproductive function for the human race, woman lies, so to speak, like an immovable prehistoric boulder in the landscape of modernity. Manifesting a not yet differentiated unity, woman seems to be untouched by the fractures and conflicts of modern culture and to remain close to the "primeval grounds of being (*Urgrund des Seins*).[8] In view of her formal unity in a logical sense, and her centuries-old confinement to the household, woman can at best be compared to the work of art, which through its framing also retains an aura of self-reference and a meaning that completely transcends the social division of labor.[9]

We can get a better grasp on Simmel's reasoning if we compare at this point his gender-specific interpretation of modern social differentation with Tönnies' ideal-typical contrast between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, which is also gender-specific.[10] Following Henry S. Maine's evolutionary perspective, Tönnies construes a transition from status to contract, whereby the difference between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* becomes identical with a strict distinction between natural units, which have profound significance for social life, and artificial ones. Tönnies also linked the polar concepts of natural and rational will to this scheme. Communal forms of life are thus rooted in real, organic life, whereas contractual relationships have a purely "ideal" character or are a "mechanical aggregate" or mere artifact. Community grows out of

7. See Simmel, "The Relative and the Absolute in the Problem of the Sexes" (1911), in Guy Oakes, tr. and ed., *Georg Simmel: On Women, Sexuality, and Love* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 125 (hereafter cited as *Simmel*).

8. *Schriften*, p. 180.

9. *Schriften*, pp. 177, 181f. and 219ff. On the traditional equation of the female sex with the status of a work of art, see Karl Scheffler, *Die Frau und die Kunst* (Berlin: Bard Verlag, 1908), pp. 22f., and Gertrud Bäumer, "Eine Metaphysik des Geschlechtsgegensatzes," in *Die Frau*, vol. 15, no. 12 (1908), pp. 705-714.

10. See Ferdinand Tönnies, *Fundamental Concepts of Sociology (Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft)*, trans. by Charles P. Loomis (New York: American Book Co., 1940).

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the organic processes of birth. Thus descent and genealogy play a dominant role in defining communal forms of life. Tönnies regards the various communal forms in analogy to the relation between mother and child, man and woman as well as siblings. The household lends itself best to an ideal-typical construction of *Gemeinschaft*. Village and town are also treated in analogy to the house. The city, however, cannot be understood in this manner, since it arose out of the transition from subsistence to market economy. This in turn permitted the development of the industrial mode of production and of modern science. Thus the city is the typical *Gesellschaft*.

Just like Simmel, Tönnies recognizes the household as the proper sphere of woman. By contrast, trade and formally free, but actually unfree, wage labor (*unfrei-freie Arbeit*) are "offensive to the female psyche."[11] The psychological difference between the sexes is also reflected in the polar opposition of the household and the rationalized and intellectualized world of "objective culture." The latter is a purely male creation, since in the course of occidental rationalization the whole *Kultur* changed into the *Zivilisation* of society and state.[12] Tönnies cannot believe that the entry of women into modern occupational life will lead to any humane reform of the existing social conditions. In fact, the vocational integration of women into the capitalist mode of production is disastrous for traditional communal relations. It is also incompatible with the female character, which is distinguished not by abstract reasoning but by genuine *Gefühlskultur*. Therefore, Tönnies can conclude: "The woman becomes enlightened, cold-hearted, conscious. Nothing is more foreign and terrible to her original inborn nature, in spite of all later modifications. Possibly nothing is more characteristic and important in the process of formation of *Gesellschaft* and destruction of *Gemeinschaft*. Through this development the 'individualism' which is the prerequisite of *Gesellschaft* comes into its own. However, the possibility of overcoming this individualism and arriving at a reconstruction of *Gemeinschaft* arises with the same process. The analogy of the fate of women with the fate of the proletariat has been recognized long ago. The growing awareness on the part of women and workers can, like that of the isolated thinker, develop and rise to a moral and humane consciousness."[13] In Tönnies' eyes, the "woman question" is inseparable from the "workers question" and can be solved only through a

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 189f.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 263f.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 191.

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reconstitution of communal forms of living. Outside the household, there is no room for developing an autonomous "female culture" in modernity. A new communal culture could arise only on the ruins of the "age of society." Then the question of a gender-specific determination of culture would become irrelevant.

Simmel, however, draws the opposite conclusion from this diagnosis of the paradoxes and pathologies of modernity. For the "objective cultural significance" of the modern women's movement emerges exactly at the historical moment when women's segregation and the specific form of female productivity — household and motherhood — are superseded by modern industry. Only because household production lost its social function could the question of a genuinely female contribution to culture arise that would consist neither in maintaining the "culture of the hearth" nor in mechanical subordination to the male division of labor. In this regard, Simmel shared with representatives of the bourgeois women's movement an interest in determining the possible contribution of women to "purely objective culture," i.e., in discovering a "new continent" of culture that could be "enriched by the difference made by female productivity."[14]

If we take into account, however, the whole structure of Simmel's theory of culture and of his gender metaphysics, it becomes clear that his interest remains superficial because it cannot be pursued, given his theoretical premises, without encountering major contradictions and antinomies. Simmel's concept of culture remains so closely tied to the male gender that the question of the possibility of a female objective culture can only be answered in the negative.[15] I do not want to address the examples that Simmel provides in discussing a possible female contribution to objective culture. Instead, I would like to show that the question itself must be considered inappropriate on the basis of Simmel's own presuppositions, and then I will treat the function that the metaphysical exaltation of gender differentiation plays in Simmel's theory of culture.

Like Marx, Simmel sees socio-cultural development as a conquest of nature through production. The human intellect externalizes itself increasingly into a world of intermediacy created by it. The individual becomes a cultured being by appropriating these creations. Working

14. *Schriften*, pp. 171-73.

15. This was already Marianne Weber's judgement. See "Die Frau und die objektive Kultur" (1913), in *Frauenfragen und Frauengedanken* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1919), p. 111. See also Guy Oakes' introduction to *Georg Simmel*, *op. cit.*, pp 43ff.

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on nature becomes identical with a gigantic process of cultivating the human species. But this process also leads to a growing separation of "subjective" and "objective" culture, i.e., a differentiation of the "culture of the individual" and the "cultural logic of the objects."[16]

Differentiation is a value in itself, but it can also lead to a crisis, even a "tragedy of culture," because the individual subject increasingly has trouble appropriating the objective achievements that the very division of labor made possible. Since for Simmel culture in general is an objective product of the purely male principle, which is marked by differentiation, fragmentation and externalization, the very idea of femininity denotes for him the utopia of a cultural principle that is not identical with the model of creative alienation. According to the latter, only the male soul objectivates itself in cultural products and then sublimates itself through their reacquisition. In fact, Simmel does not deny the possibility that an "objective female culture" is a contradiction in terms, since there is a basic "discrepancy between the essence of femininity and objective culture."[17] Femininity is for him basically a purely logical, if not imaginary phenomenon of cultural productivity that is totally different from the male mode; it is a productivity that antedates as well as transcends the historical division of labor and that at any rate has lost its proper "product" with the disappearance of the household economy.[18] Thus the idea of a genuinely female culture is utopian, a pure potentiality that must not be actualized for the sake of its own integrity.[19] This conception points to a lacuna in Simmel's discourse of modernity. It can be understood as a liminal notion and as a negation of the male logic, and may even be interpreted in mythological terms. But in practical political terms it could be realized only at the price of an antimodernist regression.

If empirical descriptions of femininity remain subordinate to the ultimately unanswerable (*aporetisch*) question of whether an objective female culture is possible, Simmel finds it "even more difficult to conceptualize

16. See Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, trans. by Tom Bottomore and David Frisby (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), pp. 446ff.

17. Simmel, "Female Culture" (1911), *Simmel*, p. 100.

18. In this regard, the possibility of a genuinely female culture reveals itself, first of all, as the absence of a product. This negative determination calls attention to parallels that subterraneously link Simmel's theory of sexual differentiation with Foucault's analysis of insanity in the Age of Reason. See his *Madness and Civilization*, trans. by Richard Howard (London: Tavistock, 1971). On the methodological problems of reconstructing a history of the absence of female history, see Silvia Bovenschen, *Die imaginierte Weiblichkeit* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1979), pp. 9ff. and 257ff.

19. Simmel, "Flirtation," *Simmel*, pp. 147f.

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the essence of maleness."[20] Indeed, here lies the basic problem of his gender metaphysics. The big conundrum turns out to be not femininity but "the male principle," for the male cannot directly experience his identity in an "absolute unity of being and gender."[21] Rather, his identity is mediated through a separation that obscures his gender behind a world of objectification. If for the woman "natural existence is too much part of her metaphysical essence in order to permit a tragic dualism,"[22] the tragedy of the male principle lies in the fact that it points beyond itself to cultural objectifications which do not identify gender. Thus woman's real cultural achievement and the metaphysical significance of the women's movement consist in the way in which they provide identity to the male principle and modern culture by being the essential other.[23]

Put differently, the meaning of the "cultural value of differentiation" reveals itself only by reference to a still undifferentiated unity and a liminal experience that transcends modernity. Simmel's paradigmatic examples are the work of art and femininity. The "crisis" and "tragedy" of culture can be grasped only if they are seen against the background of a completely different principle that inheres in the formal unity of an artwork as well as in the self-contained being of the female gender. Both constitute equivalent possibilities for reconciling a fragmented world, since "the very completeness of a given existence implies the strongest symbolic or metaphysical reference to the world's totality."[24] The symbolism of a great work of art as well as the integrity of female existence provide an "intimation of cosmic symbolism" and represent the idea of reconciling the conflict between law and freedom. Woman can still accomplish this differentiation in the "form of existence," but the divided male, who objectifies himself, can at most arrive at a partial solution in the "form of art."[25] Moreover, gender polarity becomes for Simmel a paradigm for the distinctiveness of modern culture, which can no longer be understood in unitary terms, and herein lies its greatest cultural significance. What is in principle inaccessible to empirical science can at best be symbolically expressed by an artistic ideal or by a metaphysical "world formula," which finds its "historical

20. "The Relative and the Absolute," *Simmel*, p. 124.
21. *Op. cit.*
22. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 124. This point was also made by Max Scheler, "Zum Sinn der Frauenbewegung," reprinted in *Vom Umsturz der Werte*, fifth edition (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1971), pp. 197ff.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 129.
25. *Schriften*, pp. 181f.

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paradigm" in the erotic relations of the sexes.[26]

Before turning to Simmel's theory of eroticism and sexual love in relation to his project of a sociological aesthetics, I would like to treat Weber's views in order to get another vantage point on Simmel's peculiar reasoning. Weber too perceives a close elective affinity between the spheres of aesthetics and eroticism, an affinity that also explains their relevance for understanding modernity. Weber starts from a model of value spheres, their tensions and conflicts, which is derived from Neokantian value theory, and discusses the validity of an aesthetic-expressive mode of life within this context. Where Simmel diagnoses a separation of subjective and objective culture, Weber contrasts the ethical rationalism of methodical conduct with the irrationality of subjective experience. Instead of a dualist gender metaphysics that opposes male and female culture we find in Weber a critical discussion of the divergent claims of ethically as against esthetically oriented conduct.

Subjective Culture

Weber's writings rarely address directly the issues connected with the rise of the women's movement. In good measure this has to do with the tacit division of labor between him and his wife, Marianne, who became a spokeswoman for the bourgeois women's movement and a leading feminist theoretician in the decade before WWI. However, Weber was familiar with the "woman's question" early in his life. His mother Helene participated since the late 1880s in the "first hesitant efforts at joint female action."[27] From the second half of the 1890s, Marianne Weber was engaged in the movement at the same time that she became, next to Else von Richthofen, her husband's most eager pupil. A ruse of fate gave her the active political and propagandistic career she had expected her husband to play. She became a much sought-after and often-quoted spokeswoman for that puritanical view of marital love and fidelity she shared with her husband for some time and maintained until the end of her life. We owe to Marianne Weber the evidence that permits us to reconstruct the gradual change in Max Weber's attitude toward eroticism and sexual love.[28]

In the beginning, Max Weber's position with respect to feminist issues

26. "The Relative and the Absolute," *Simmel*, p. 103.

27. Marianne Weber, *Max Weber: A Biography*, trans. and ed. by Harry Zohn (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1988), p. 143.

28. See Guenther Roth's introduction to the Transaction Books edition of Marianne Weber's biography, pp. xv-lx.

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concerned primarily the "marriage question." This becomes clear when we look at the way the couple reacted to the invasion of Heidelberg by the erotic movement in 1907. "The Webers," recalls Marianne, "had firm convictions and felt that they shared responsibility for the general morality. . . . They regarded marriage as one of those 'absolute' ideals that had to be defended anew, provided that it was based upon the power of love and on faith in its being 'forever'."[29]

What had happened? Two members of Ludwig Klages' "Cosmic Round" in Munich, Alfred Schuler and Karl Wolfskehl, had championed the idea of a "new paganism" as spokesmen of the Schwabing *bohème*. They advocated radical "sexual liberation" from all ascetic ideals and patriarchal forms of domination. Their paganism attacked not only the values of occidental rationalism, but also the standards of bourgeois sexual morality. Already a cult figure, the Countess Franziska zu Reventlow played the role of the new hetaera who disdained the bluestockings of the bourgeois women's movement and demanded the establishment of an erotic culture in the sense of *l'art pour l'art*.[30] This sort of *Kulturkritik* was radicalized by the Freud pupil Otto Gross, who was also influenced by the works of Bachofen and Nietzsche. Gross raised the political demand for a "sexual revolution." The revolutionary force of "free love," he believed, had a socially therapeutic function and could transform society. Such ideas entered the circle of friends around the Webers. A more attenuated version of Nietzschean feminism was propagated by Helene Stöcker and her "Association for the Protection of Motherhood" and became very controversial in the bourgeois women's movement.[31]

Instead of pursuing the varieties of this "new ethic" and the personal entanglements of the Webers and their friends in this movement, I would like to examine the arguments with which Max and Marianne

29. *Ibid.*, p. 371.

30. On Franziska Gräfin zu Reventlow, see Marianne Weber, *Die Frauen und die Liebe* (Königstein: Langewiesche Verlag, 1935), pp. 180-195; Helmut Fritz, *Die erotische Rebellion* (Frankfurt a/M: Fischer Verlag, 1980); Regina Schaps, "Tragik und Erotik-Kultur der Geschlechter," in Wolfgang Lipp, ed., *Kulturtypen, Kulturcharaktere* (Berlin: Reimer Verlag, 1987), pp. 79-96; Johannes Székely, *Franziska Gräfin zu Reventlow: Leben und Werk* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1979).

31. See Wolfgang Schwentker, "Passion as a Mode of Life: Max Weber, the Otto Gross Circle and Eroticism," in Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Jürgen Osterhammel, eds., *Max Weber and His Contemporaries* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987), pp. 483-498; on Stöcker, see Amy Hackett, "Helene Stöcker: Left-Wing Intellectual and Sex Reformer," in Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann and Marion Kaplan, eds., *When Biology Became Destiny* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984), pp. 109-130.

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Weber tried to meet this challenge, especially to the marital values which they had taken for granted. This will help us to understand how Max, in contrast to Marianne, later changed his position in theory and practice toward a form of eroticism and sexual love that breaks the bonds of marriage. I will refrain from any psychological interpretation of Weber's transformation, and focus instead on the way in which his changing views are reflected in his work.[32]

At the time, Max and Marianne Weber defended bourgeois sexual morality from the standpoint of a Christian worldview that was anchored in the tradition of ascetic Protestantism. Sexual fidelity is for them a taken-for-granted ascetic ideal that binds the "beautiful moment" to the rule of the moral law, which determines the mutual responsibility of the partners "up to the pianissimo of old age."[33] Law, duty and asceticism constitute the ideals of a monogamous community, which demands sacrifice and subordinates unbridled eros to the ethical norms of a puritanical union of souls. The demand for free love and a child out of wedlock appears as a "desecration of monogamy" that amounts to "killing something divine." According to this ascetic ethic of responsibility, sensual enjoyment must not become "an end in itself, not even in the form of an aesthetically sublimated eroticism."[34]

Here we encounter the spirit of ascetic Protestantism, which shaped not only the Webers' marital understanding but also influenced the comprehensive study *Wife and Mother in Legal Development*, which Marianne wrote during the years of Max's illness and convalescence.[35] Weber's 1904 essay on the elective affinity between ascetic Protestantism

32. See Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey, "Max Weber und die Frauen," in Christian Gneuss and Jürgen Kocka, eds., *Max Weber: Ein Symposium* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1988), pp. 142-54; Hermann Kulke, "Orthodoxe Restauration und hinduistische Sektenreligiosität im Werk Max Webers," in Wolfgang Schluchter, ed., *Max Webers Studie über Hinduismus und Buddhismus* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1984), pp. 293-332; Arthur Mitzman, *The Iron Cage: An Historical Interpretation of Max Weber* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1970), pp. 165 ff.

33. See Marianne Weber, *Max Weber*, *op. cit.*, pp. 371-90. The phrase "up to the pianissimo of old age," a maxim of an ethic of responsibility, occurs at the very end of Marianne Weber, *Ehefrau und Mutter in der Rechtsentwicklung* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1907), p. 572, and toward the last version of the "Zwischenbetrachtung" (1920), published under the title, "Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions," in H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 350; it also appears in the dedication to Marianne Weber in the first volume of the *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1920).

34. Marianne, *Max Weber*, *op. cit.*, pp. 371 and 374.

35. Mariane Weber, *Ehefrau und Mutter*, *op. cit.*

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and the modern capitalist ethos provided her not only with a theoretical framework but also guided her substantive interest in the development of marriage law from archaic communities to the bourgeois marriage and its puritan morality. Like her husband, Marianne was interested in identifying the non-economic, purely spiritual determinants in the emergence of modern secular conduct. As against the monistic approach of the economic interpretation of history, she emphasized the multiple influences that shaped the development of marriage law and marital conduct. Again, like her husband, she concluded that bourgeois marital morality resulted from that religious radicalism which began with the Reformation and continued through Calvinism, English Puritanism and the Baptist sects.

In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* Weber attempted to reconstruct the purely religious motives at the root of the capitalist sense of vocation. The religious conviction of the world's sinfulness demanded an inner-worldly asceticism that aimed at destroying any "spontaneous sensual enjoyment of life."[36] Sexual intercourse appeared at most acceptable in marriage and only for the sake of procreation, and in the selection of partners erotic attractiveness was subordinated to sober rational choice. Like his wife, Max Weber believed that a sexual morality which rested basically on a rationalist affirmation of abstinence had led to an ethical transformation of marital relations and thus to the "flowering of a chivalry" that helped bring about the modern "emancipation of woman."[37] The idea of a universal priesthood, the demand for freedom of conscience for both sexes, and the rejection of any kind of militarism favored the formal equality of women in the Puritan communities. But what was the price?

In vivid imagery, Weber sketches the fundamental rejection of all sensual culture (*Sinnenkultur*) in its consequences for practical conduct and its relation to cultural values that have no immediate religious relevance. On the one hand, the impersonality of charity and the distrust of friendship in ascetic Puritanism appear as the logical consequence of every ascetic ethic that perceives in all purely emotional and personal relations the danger of the "idolatry of the flesh." On the other

36. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. by Talcott Parsons (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 119.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 264. The phrase "emancipation of woman" is an insert from 1920. For a similar discussion of Puritan sexual morality, see Marianne Weber, *Ehefrau und Mutter*, *op. cit.*, and the formulation: "Just as freedom of conscience was the mother of 'the Rights of Man,' so it was the cradle of women's rights" (p. 290).

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hand, this attitude must in principle oppose the esthetic sphere insofar as the latter retains any elements of sensuality (*Sinnenkunst*). Therefore, Puritan England sacrificed most art forms. This was accompanied by the emergence of a uniform and standardized lifestyle. Together with the industrial mode of production, this process eventually led to the iron constraints on conduct and the tragedy of modern professionalism of which Weber spoke with such pathos.

It is not difficult to see that Weber, in depicting the rejection of sensual culture as well as the treatment of positive science as the only explicitly approved non-religious value, also portrays his own personal ethos. This originally religious rejection of sensual culture, to which the Webers still tried to adhere, was challenged to the core by the erotic movement and the literary-esthetic avant-garde of the time. The challenge from a "free love" that eluded ethical and religious regulation and had affinity with an esthetic and expressive lifestyle deeply affected Weber and finally made him modify decisively his views on the cultural significance of a purely ethical and religious value position. He came to develop three strategies toward the "erotic question." First, with Marianne he continued to uphold the unconditional validity of the ethical ideal of monogamous marriage, but he became willing to allow persons unable to live up to it a practical dispensation under certain preconditions, a dispensation that he claimed in the end for himself.[38] Second, given his conviction of the autonomous value of sexual abstinence, Weber became now strongly interested in the effects of a norm-free eroticism on the personality. This interest is reflected in his reception of Freud's works and in his virulent critique of Otto Gross. Weber repudiated the latter's plea for a sexual ethic that embraced the therapeutic function of sexual release, but he accepted the lasting contribution of Freud's studies insofar as they succeeded in creating an "exact casuistry."[39] Third, Weber was troubled and fascinated by the notion that ethical values are not the only normative ones, since the spheres of the erotic and the esthetic each possess a value of its own (*Eigenwert*). In Nietzsche's terms, they are "beyond good and evil" and thus have a close elective affinity. Weber began to plan a sociology of art, but he managed to write only the fragment on the sociology of music. He also developed an avid interest in the various efforts to found a specifically modern esthetics.

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38. See Marianne Weber, *Max Weber*, *op. cit.*, p 371.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 376. On the relation to Freud, see Tracy B. Strong, "Weber and Freud: Vocation and Self-Acknowledgement," in *Max Weber and His Contemporaries*, *op. cit.*, pp. 468-482.

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From modern esthetics Weber also expected a clarification of eroticism as a particular value sphere. For instance, he wrote to Georg Lukács after reading the first installment of his *Heidelberg Philosophy of Art*: "I am very eager to see what happens when you turn to the concept of 'form.' After all, form is not only found at the value level that rises above the level of the experiential. The erotic sphere, which reaches deep down into the 'cage' [of one's own individuality], also has form. It shares the fate of bearing the guilt common to all formed life. It stands close to the esthetic attitude by virtue of its opposition to everything that belongs to the realm of 'form-free' divinity. The topographic location of the erotic must be established, and I am very interested to find out where you will place it."[40] Unfortunately, Lukács' esthetic theory also remained a fragment. Thus we must determine the topographic location of the erotic and the esthetic elsewhere. Weber's sociology of religion provides us with a key, in particular through the three versions of the "Intermediary Reflections." Together with the two speeches on science and politics as vocations, the last version became Weber's ultimate legacy to us. Not surprisingly, much of the recent Weber literature has dealt with these last writings.[41]

Weber sketched the cultural autonomy of the esthetic and the erotic in a typology and sociology of rationalism, which lays out the range of fundamental conflict among the various orders of life (*Lebensordnungen*). In the great salvation religions and their image of a transcendental god, the basic tension between religious ethics and the world becomes radicalized through the opposition of a "cosmos of natural causality" and a "cosmos of ethical, retributive causality."[42] The sublimation of salvation in the direction of an ethic of conviction (*Gesinnungsethik*) exacerbates the conflict with the world, because the religious rationalization of conduct also leads to a greater comprehension of the logic inherent in the other value spheres, and thus to a greater awareness of the tensions between them. In Weber's scheme, the rise of a universalist ethic of brotherhood is of crucial importance for the differentiation of the other spheres.

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40. Weber to Georg Lukács (March 10, 1913), in Eva Karádi and Eva Ferkete, eds., *Georg Lukács: Briefwechsel 1902-1917* (Stuttgart: Metzler Verlag,1982), p. 320. For the English, see Judith Marcus and Zoltan Tar, eds., *Georg Lukács. Selected Correspondence 1902-1920* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 222. The *Heidelberger Philosophie der Kunst* appeared as vol. 15 of the Lukács *Werke*.

41. On the controversial interpretations of the three versions with regard to their significance for Weber's *oeuvre*, see Wolfgang Schluchter, *Rationalism, Religion, and Domination: A Weberian Perspective*, trans. by Neil Solomon (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1989), Chapter 12.

42. *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, *op. cit.*, p. 355.

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The logical precondition for the "universalism of love" and "acosmistic" (unspecific) love is the emergence of religious congregations that differentiate themselves from the household and the sib and gain support from the authorities in the politically pacified empires. But the universalist claims of this ethic of love are directed against the extended family and the neighborhood association no less than against the sphere of political power proper. Thus the moral "slave revolt" organized by the priests reveals itself also as an "ethic of the ruled." Since "women had everywhere shown a particular susceptibility to religious stimuli," Weber observed, "this domestication provided ever stronger grounds for assigning religious value to the essentially feminine virtues of the ruled."[43] The more political authority became institutionalized in its own right, the greater was the likelihood that subjects would "take flight into the irrationality of apolitical sentiment," especially into the erotic sphere.[44]

Weber was especially concerned with the tension between the universalist ethic of brotherhood and the secular spheres of economy, politics, and science, on the one hand, and the spheres of sexual love and art, on the other. The latter two stood in particularly sharp opposition to the salvation religions because of their close similarities with mystical religiosity. The psychological similarity between the highest forms of eroticism and "the sublimated forms of heroic piety" and their "mutual psychological and physiological substitutability" explain why these two spheres became sharpest rivals in the rationalized and intellectualized world of modernity.[45] Only a culture that claimed to be able, in principle, to rationalize all spheres could provoke the emergence of "irrational" subjective experience as an autonomous sphere.

Religiosity, however, came to share a retreat into the private experience of the extraordinary with erotic intimacy and with subjective enjoyment of *l'art pour l'art*. The sublimation of sexuality into eroticism, in the sense of a "consciously cultivated, extra-mundane sphere," was possible only in a purely intellectualist culture that embraced ascetic professionalism. Extra-mundane, especially extra-marital, sexuality could appear as "the only tie connecting human beings with the natural source of all life," opening "a gate into the most irrational and

43. From the first version of the "Intermediate Reflections" in Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, eds. (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 591f.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 601.
45. *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, *op. cit.*, p. 348.

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thereby real kernel of life, in opposition to the mechanisms of rationalization.[46]

In recognizing the autonomy of "love for love's sake" and of "art for art's sake," Weber decisively modified the conceptual framework of *The Protestant Ethic* in relation to his theory of modernity: "If anything, we realize again today that something can be sacred not only in spite of its not being beautiful but rather because and insofar as it is not beautiful. . . . And, since Nietzsche, we realize that something can be beautiful, not only in spite of the aspect in which it is not good, but rather in that very aspect. . . . It is a commonplace to observe that something may be true although it is not beautiful and not holy and not good."[47] Thus Weber's theory of modernity linked up with the cultural avant-garde which identified the distinctiveness of modern culture with a systematic differentiation of the esthetic-expressive sphere from the purely cognitive-instrumental and moral-practical spheres. This amounted to a splitting up of "substantial reason" that had once been unified in the religous and metaphysical worldviews.[48] This theory of modernity took up central motifs of the early romanticist critique of reason, which had endeavored to defend the "internal infinity of the subject" (Hegel) against the logical and substantive imperatives of theoretical and practical rationalism and to rehabilitate the spheres of esthetics and of sexual love as matters of authentic expressiveness.[49] By acknowledging the autonomy of the erotic and the esthetic value realms, Weber integrated this esthetic-expressive modernism into a theory of

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46. *Ibid.*, pp. 345f. A lucid analysis of Weber's theory of erotic love and of its possible significance for feminist theory today is found in Roslyn Wallach Bologh, "Max Weber on Erotic Love: A Feminist Inquiry," in Scott Lash and Sam Whimster, eds., *Max Weber: Rationality and Modernity* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987), pp. 242-258.

47. Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, *op. cit.*, pp. 147ff.

48. See Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984 and 1987), vol. I, pp. 157ff; vol. II, pp. 303ff. Weber himself recognized the elective affinity between the postulate of value-freedom in science and the postulate of autonomy in esthetics, and in this connection mentioned Baudelaire and Nietzsche. See "Science as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

49. On the "Modernism of Romanticism," see Hans Sedlmayr, "Ästhetischer Anarchismus in Romantik und Moderne," in *Scheidewege*, vol. 8 (1978), pp. 174-196; Hauke Brunkhorst, "Romantik und Kulturkritik: Zerstörung der dialektischen Vernunft?," *Merkur*, no. 436 (1985), pp. 484-496; Karl Heinz Bohrer, "Die Modernität der Romantik: Zur Tradition ihrer Verhinderung," in *Merkur*, no. 469 (1988). pp.179-198; and Bohrer, *Die Kritik der Romantik* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1989). On the distinction between "instrumental action" and "expressive action" and the inclusion of the erotic sphere in the latter, see also Max Scheler, *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie* (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1973), p. 118.

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rationalization and modernization which had begun with a massive historical process of religious disenchantment and now conjured up the return of the gods. As a "praise of polytheism," Weber's theory can be understood as "myth (*Mythos*) directed against itself," a post-historical attitude to history.[50] He thereby anticipated that break between modernism and modernity that Daniel Bell later described as a cultural contradiction of capitalism. Demanding limitless self-fulfillment for the individual, the "post-modern" counterculture represents an esthetic-hedonist, consumption-oriented expressive culture. But the institutional core of modern society, which found its historical paradigm in the Protestant ethic, still rests on a conventional ethic.[51]

Sociological Aesthetics

Weber himself did not cross the bridge to an unlimited cultural modernism, and resisted "postmodern" temptations. In contrast to Simmel, he left behind neither a theory of esthetics nor of eroticism, which could have situated the distinctiveness of cultural modernism in the "beautiful appearance (*Schein*)" or in the "beautiful moment." By proclaiming the polytheism of values and the transition from unity to difference on the categorical level, Weber followed, however, Simmel's earlier views on relationism and perspectivism.[52] For Simmel, sexual love is one of the "great formative categories of existence," an "ungrounded and primary category," which develops a logic of its own and becomes autonomous within its own limits, in analogy to the other great cultural spheres (art, religion, science, morality).[53] In relation

50. This phrase refers to a modernist rejection of any history founded on the Judeo-Christian tradition and of any philosophy of history related to it. See Theodor W. Adorno, *Äesthetische Theorie*, ed. by Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970), pp. 41f.; see also Wolfgang J. Mommsen, "Rationalization and Myth in Weber's Thought," in *The Political and Social Theory of Max Weber: Collected Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 133-144.

51. See Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), and "Beyond Modernism, Beyond Self," in Quentin Anderson et al., eds., *Art, Politics and Will: Essays in Honor of Lionel Trilling* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), pp. 213-253.

52. Simmel's epistemological position is elaborated in *The Philosophy of Money*, *op. cit.*; see also his "Anfang einer unvollendeten Selbstdarstellung," in Kurt Gassen and Michael Landmann, eds., *Buch des Dankes an Georg Simmel* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1958), pp. 9f. Simmel and Weber share the categorical switch from unity to difference not only with contemporary champions of the theory of social differentiation but also with the theoreticians of "postmodernity." See Hauke Brunkhorst, "Die Komplexität der Kultur: Zum Wiedererwachen der Kulturkritik zwischen Moderne und Postmoderne," in *Soziologische Revue*, vol. 11 (1988), pp. 393-403.

53. Simmel, "On Love (A Fragment)," *Simmel*, pp. 159 and 161.

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to them, however, sexual love acquires a special importance, both because of its organic roots and its purely symbolic content. On the one hand, love is more fundamentally connected with the basic unity of life than are other feelings; on the other, the most highly developed form of eroticism "plays out" the formal structure of cultural modernism. If Weber failed to tell us whether a modernity differentiated into separate value spheres can be conceived at all as a formal unity, Simmel at least provides us with a hint on the symbolic level how the experience of difference can be categorically construed.

For Simmel, differentiation characterizes the socio-cultural process as well as the relation of the sexes. Whereas the acosmistic love of an ethic of brotherhood rests on a communal experience of mystical possession, sexual love involves an experience of difference, an "intermediate state between possession and non-possession."[54] If modern love is a mutual give and take, it also recognizes that "the absoluteness of the individual ego creates a wall between human beings, which the most passionate determination of both partners cannot break down and which makes 'possession' an illusion, insofar as it wants to be more than the fact and awareness of being loved in turn."[55] This "individualism of love" and its exclusiveness toward all other spheres, which proves its "totally subjective character,"[56] is at the same time the result of a comprehensive process of rationalization and differentiation, as Simmel analyzed it both in his *Philosophy of Money* and in his formal sociology. In several respects, the erotic relation of the sexes is connected with this developmental logic and the formal processes of association. The difference between the purely sensual enjoyment of sexuality and sexual love as *l'art pour l'art* reflects that process of "value increment" which derives from the impact of labor on nature and reveals the "most spiritualized forms of life" to be "cultivated nature."[57] But Simmel also analyzes this process of cultivation, which constitutes the history of the species, in terms of a teleological model that displaces the final purpose with intermediacy. For Simmel, "society" is identical with a "sum of reciprocal effects" between the forms and the content of human drives and motives. In this process, human beings

54. "Flirtation," *Simmel*, p. 133.

55. *Schriften*, pp. 251f. This excursus on Platonic and modern eros was omitted in the English translation of "On Love (A Fragment)," *Simmel*. But see now Guy Oakes, "Eros and Modernity: Georg Simmel on Love," in David Franks and E. Doyle McCarthy, eds., *The Sociology of Emotions* (Greenwitch: JAI Press, 1989), pp. 229-247.

56. "On Love (A Fragment)," *Simmel*, p. 165.

57. Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, *op. cit.*, p. 446.

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must accept more and more detours to reach their destinations. Society comes to share this reversal of ends and means with art as "purposiveness without purpose" (Kant) and with the autonomy of erotic love from the original reproductive "purpose of the species."[58]

By viewing sociability as the playful variant ("play-form") of society (*Vergesellschaftung*) and coquetry (*Koketterie*) as the playful variant of eroticism, Simmel can point not only to a profound affinity between the social and the erotic sphere, but also to two "sociological structures" — art and the game — that abstract the form of a given reality.[59] As a "sociological artform," playing games as well as the game of love become vehicles for a deeper insight. Abstracting from all content, this insight "distills" the formal structure that connects socio-cultural evolution and cultural modernization with the erotic relation of the sexes. If coquetry means the simultaneity of implicit yielding and refusal, it demonstrates playfully "the pure form of erotic decision-making" and can combine this polarity in a unified mode of conduct, since no final decision need be made.[60] Playing with the erotic decision lends to coquetry "that peculiar character of the preliminary, of suspension and irresolution," which becomes a purpose in itself and therefore appears analogous to art with its "purposiveness without purpose."[61] In this manner, coquetry reflects the cultural peculiarity of woman as a "promise not yet kept"[62] — this had made Simmel ask the question of the possibility of a genuine female culture. But the polar relation of the sexes also finds its most general expression in the dualism of coquetry, in the purely abstract form of affirmation and denial. Thus, coquetry finally becomes a symbol for many kinds of conduct: "Consider the charms of the simultaneous *for* and *against*, the *perhaps*, the *protracted* reservation of the decision, which permits a foretaste of the enjoyment of both its aspects together, aspects which in their realization are mutually exclusive. All this is not only characteristic of the flirtation of a woman with a man. On the contrary, it plays upon thousands of other contents. This is the form in which the indecisiveness of life is crystalized into a thoroughly positive way of acting. Although it does not make a virtue of this necessity, it does make it into a pleasure. The soul has found the appropriate form for its relation

58. On this "axial turn of life," see also Simmel, *Lebensanschauung: Vier metaphysische Kapitel* (Munich: Duncker & Humblot, 1918), pp. 38ff. and 49ff.

59. Simmel, "Sociability" (1910), in Donald Lavine, ed., *Georg Simmel on Individuality and Social Forms* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 130 and 134ff.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 135.

61. Simmel, "Flirtation," *Simmel*, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 148.

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to countless things in that playful approach and withdrawal — even though it is certainly not always accompanied by the attitude of 'play' — in the act of taking hold of something only in order to let it fall again, of letting it fall only to take hold of it again, in what could be called the tentative turning toward something on which the shadow of its own denial already falls."[63]

Simmel's view of the transcendental nature of coquetry gives us warrant to conclude that, in contrast to Weber, he crossed not only the bridge to cultural modernism but also attributed paradigmatic significance to the erotic relations of the sexes with regard to the analysis of the modern style of life. Simmel's "sociological impressionism" is indebted to Baudelaire's esthetic concept of modernity, which emphasizes the distinctiveness of the esthetic-expressive sphere as against the institutional core of modern society.[64] With its exaltation of the transitory, the fugitive and the contingent, this cultural modernism offers not only an "abstract opposition to history"[65] but also the basis for a "gay polytheism," which expresses itself in the change of fashion and the multitude of styles. Novelty becomes the core concept of a "superficial culture" (Nietzsche), which immobilizes history proper through a "dialectic of the novel and the invariant" (Walter Benjamin) and which can understand duration only as absolute change.

Simmel's analyses of cultural modernity originate in an intense experience of contemporaneity that motivates him to add a modern sociological esthetic to the reconciling function of art, as Schiller postulated it: "to suspend time in time and to make compatible becoming with absolute existence and change with identity."[66] When Peter Bürger launched his critique of idealist esthetics and demanded the "transformation of art into praxis," with a view toward the artistic avant-garde, he appeared more retrospective than prospective in relation to Simmel's theory.[67]

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63. *Ibid.*, p. 151.

64. See David Frisby, *Sociological Impressionism* (London: Heinemann, 1981), pp. 68 ff. and 102ff. and Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1985), pp. 1-108.

65. Jürgen Habermas, "Die Moderne — ein unvollendetes Projekt," in Habermas, *Kleine politische Schriften* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1981), pp. 452f. See also my essay "Die Seele und das Geld. Kulturtheoretsiche Implikationen in George Simmels 'Philosophie des Geldes'," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, Sonderheft 27 (1986), pp. 57-74.

66. Friedrich Schiller, *Über das Schöne und die Kunst: Schriften zur Ästhetik* (Munich: Deutsche Taschenbuch Verlag, 1984), p. 178.

67. See Peter Bürger, *Theorie der Avantgarde* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1974); see also W. Martin Lüdke, ed., *Theorie der Avantgarde: Antworten auf Peter Bürgers Bestimmung von Kunst und bürgerlicher Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1976).

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With Bürger, however, we can object to Simmel that art is in danger of losing its critical and utopian content if it is understood as the paradigm of everyday life. Simmel seems to have noticed this paradox when he contrasted his sociological impressionism with a traditional notion of the artwork and the utopia of female culture. From both viewpoints, the modern lifestyle appears rather as an alientated form of the reconciliation of nature and culture or of law and freedom. Finally, the fact that for Simmel the esthetic function comes into "play" in every human association can be understood to mean that eros and culture cannot be distinguished in terms of a critical difference between the pleasure principle and the reality principle, insofar as culture always transcends natural necessity. It becomes "affirmative" only when it abandons the critical idea of "an erotic reconciliation of man and nature in the aesthetic attitude, where order is beauty and work is play."[68]

68. Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), p. 176.

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Notes and Commentary:

Does Critical Theory have a Future? The Elizabethtown Telos *Conference (February 23-25, 1990)*

Telos Staff

At the close of the 1960s, when it became clear that the social upheaval of the previous years had gradually degenerated either into moribund Marxist-Leninist cults or a myriad of new particularistic interest groups with no immediately obvious *universal* emancipatory goals, Rudi Dutschke announced his famous default strategy: "the long march through the institutions." Allegedly, this gradual infiltration of the structure of power would allow radical "moles" to redirect those institutions in such a way as to create the objective conditions for the qualitative social changes that had been impossible to bring about through more direct confrontations. The history of the next two decades proved this latter strategy even less viable than the earlier one. Radicals did not change the institutions; rather, institutions changed aging radicals into precisely the mainline apparatchiks they had sought to displace. Marx's axiom concerning the relation of dependence of social being on social consciousness reasserted itself with a vengeance. One of the few things that has changed, at least in academia, where most ex-radicals eventually drifted, is that the new mainstream professors, unlike stodgy earlier generations, have assimilated radical rhetoric as part of their new and improved image.

Critical Theory did not escape this abysmal generational fate. Although declared over and done with by 1950 — the date chosen for the final burial by its official American undertaker — it resurfaced in the 1960s in the wake of the publication of Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* which, paradoxically, seemed to rule out precisely the sort of history that was to unfold in the next few years. Clearly, the reason for this reawakening of internal opposition had nothing to do with any sudden interest in Schoenberg or with art and philosophy rekindling the flame of sanity, as predicated by Adorno's aesthetics.

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Rather, it resulted from frenzied efforts to find some framework to explain the seeming involution of "the American Dream" by a generation of students lured to universities with the promise of the good life but ultimately rewarded with suburbia, Coca-Cola and, worst of all, Vietnam.

What classical Critical Theory had not foreseen, because of its inability to historicize itself, was the extent to which, with the totality paralyzed by the Cold War, the dialectic of bureaucratic involution would continue to unfold within the two adversarial but complementary parts. Shocked by Auschwitz, Hiroshima and Siberia, the first generation of critical theorists saw Hollywood as essentially another version of the same and, consequently, undertook an unconvincing neo-Kantian or Freudian theoretical detour which led to the strategy of hibernation generally misperceived as a terminal pessimism concerning possibilities for change. Habermas' linguistic turn of the mid-1960s sought to reverse this alleged theoretical *rigor mortis* by uncoupling interaction from labor and relocating freedom in a political and discoursive dimension which the founding fathers were blamed for mechanically collapsing into economics on the basis of an implicitly assumed Marxist model of base and superstructure.

This linguistic redirection of Critical Theory amounted to a rejection of the dialectic of enlightenment. It reactivated those "bourgeois" values previously condemned as pseudo-universal and exclusionary in order to recast a project of modernity as incomplete (rather than irreversibly self-destroyed) and therefore still universally valid. As a result, politics became possible once again — no longer as class struggle but as rational consensus formation. Within the new framework, history was no longer leading to the totally administered society, but to the self-administered seminar. Far from constituting a radical theoretical other, Critical Theory was back in the mainstream. Its mission now was to point out the one-sidedness of dominant thought. By integrating the results of particular disciplines in a broader synthesis, communication theory promised to reveal that emancipatory teleology hitherto hidden to disciplines accepted in their reified autonomy, yet seen as hopelessly mired in their own particularity. This project set the political agenda for the next generation of critical theorists who, as a result, rushed to create Critical Theory subdisciplines in practically every academic department.

Telos came into being precisely at this juncture. However, owing to its accident of birth in the American academic hinterland already devastated intellectually by banalities such as analytic philosophy, it never really accepted the linguistic turn or the all too convenient political strategy it entailed. As a journal, it did accept the new "linguistificators" in its fold and sought to integrate their analysis into a broader reconstitution of Critical Theory along more substantive lines: by historicizing the whole enterprise and providing it with a phenomenological foundation the first generation had wrongly rejected as irreversibly compromised with Nazi ideology. While remaining internally pluralist in outlook — pending the resolution of differences via the elaboration and reconciliation of various positions in relation to a never-materialized New

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Left reorganization — the journal went into what at that time was seen as a theoretical "holding pattern." Unfortunately, for a number of circumstantial reasons, not only did the long-awaited internal discussions never really take place, but theoretical concerns gradually gave way to careerist interests. Notwithstanding all the rhetoric about consensus, the bottom line took precedence over any intersubjectivity. After a series of unrelated and relatively irrelevant internal squabbles, the editorial board split, thus paving the way for the constitution of a distinctive theoretical position having little to do with either communication theory or any uncritical return to the faith of the founding fathers.

This is why, after a period during which no major national editorial *Telos* meetings were held, it was deemed useful to organize a conference to elaborate and concretize the journal's general theoretical perspective. As luck would have it, precisely at this time Elizabethtown College offered to host a conference dealing with Critical Theory. Given this opportunity, the conference was refocused specifically on "The Future of Critical Theory." Located in the midst of Amish country, Elizabethtown College turned out to be one of Pennsylvania's better kept secrets. The premodern surrounding — one of the few remaining areas in the US where a substantial sector of the population refuses to employ technology to avoid the alienation Heidegger made a career denouncing — provided a perfect vantage point whence to reexamine the flaws of modernity and postmodernity that, from the very beginning, have also had a significant impact on whomever has ever been associated with Critical Theory.

While always distrustful of "party lines," it is nevertheless necessary for an independent journal such as *Telos* to spell out from time to time what it is all about, rather than simply pretending to enrich "the public sphere" with more impenetrable scholastic bombast whose primary function is usually as filler for otherwise barren academic *curriculum vitae*. If the communication theory version of Critical Theory is critical only in the weak Kantian sense, then it may be time not only to point to the immense theoretical gaps separating the first and second generations of critical theorists, but also to think through ways to reformulate a new version. This is why the conference took on the kind of structure that was later to become the object of some of the participants' wrath. The point was not to come up with a well-managed conference, but to begin with fundamental philosophical questions, develop their implications for Critical Theory, and then see what all this had to do with concrete politics and cultural questions. As it became clear in the conference, one need not necessarily begin with foundations, but somewhere in the process of constructing, reconstructing or merely contemplating social theory it is essential to deal with foundations — especially if the point of the conference is to prefigure a new version of Critical Theory which, unlike the first two, may have a future.

Foundations of Critical Theory

The first panelist, David Gross, spoke on "Recycling Old Traditions." He

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periodized the Frankfurt School's history in terms of the two main phases that crystallized after the initial 1923-1931 period, when the Institute was still Marxist and merely sought to provide an immanent critique of capitalism: the first, from the 1930s to the 1950s when, under the directorship of Max Horkheimer, "classical" Critical Theory took on its distinctive profile and the immanent critique of capitalism was gradually displaced by an attempt to salvage emancipatory and critical elements in a culture becoming increasingly affirmative (while broadening the critique of capitalism to cover Western civilization as such); the second, from the mid-1960s to the present, when the linguistic turn brought back immanent critique as well as a programmatic outlook. The price paid, however, was that this version of Critical Theory ended up operating entirely within the dominant liberal framework, thus losing much of its critical edge. This is why Gross focused on some features of the classical phase he would like to see reemphasized, such as prematurely discarded traditions which, as recent East European events have shown, are much more resilient than modernists seem to think. Habermas' version of modernity downplays traditions seen, at best, as premodern residues rapidly fading out of the social picture. Yet they are crucial for any attempt to reconstitute communities in the face of a growing social disintegration no amount of rational discourse seems able to reverse. Furthermore, the power of the past's "non-identity" and negativity seems to be lost in the communication version of Critical Theory. Any substantive reconstruction will henceforth have to pay considerably more attention to these seemingly obsolete cultural elements as actually constitutive features of the *Lebenswelt* — not in the Kantian presuppositional sense in which Habermas uses this notion, but in Husserl's sense of immediately lived experience.

Next, Robert D'Amico reconstructed the Popper-Adorno debate which took place in the early 1960s and its crucial role in the history of Critical Theory, particularly in terms of how it turned out to be a catalyst in precipitating the subsequent linguistic turn. According to D'Amico, Adorno was apparently unprepared for this debate and, at least in the original oral presentations, seemed to concede far too much to Popper. Only later did he write a massive introduction to the volume of the proceeedings, as well as an additional piece, which makes the published version of the debate seem like a much more balanced confrontation. The point, however, is that in the verbal debate Adorno's cavalier and surprisingly conciliatory attitude betrayed a certain limitation on the part of traditional Critical Theory in confronting mainstream social science. For D'Amico, the problem lies in Critical Theory's adherence to the dogma of the unity of theory and practice. Torn between inevitably one-sided theory and, consequently, an underdetermined practice, social behavior can best be explained *post hoc* by beginning with its results. In its place, in connection with reconstructing a third wave of Critical Theory, D'Amico proposed focusing on "rational reconstructions" to provide a better account of the actors' intentions as well of the unintended consequences of their actions. In other words, the residual objectivism of classical and linguistified Critical Theory has to give way to

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historicism and pragmatism while acknowledging the limitations of theory in accounting for social action.

Though his most recent essay in *Telos* was "Back to Adorno," the next speaker, Robert Hullot-Kentor, asked the audience to "Forget Adorno." By this he meant the need to put aside the American caricature of Adorno — the pessimistic aesthete — who could not help but come up with skewed ideas like the "totally administered society." Kentor wanted to show that this concept in particular is a lot less improbable than it may sound, and that the incredulity it occasions is the result of credulousness for administration. He went on to charge that the organization of the *Telos* conference was itself managerial: beginning with "Foundations" it programmatically moved on to "Popular Culture," the point where the administrative mind proves that it stands above thought. All culture becomes "popular culture" when one begins with "foundations" because the latter is the fulcrum of administrative intelligence. Kentor presented this as an immanent critique of the conference that could be a model of an approach to culture that did something other than end up posturing above mass culture — a posturing which, in any case, serves to hide a real alliance with it. Kentor was not proselytizing for "culture," but, rather, thought that in disposing over it necessarily results in representing the worst of it. Along these lines, he thought that in the future *Telos* could not only imagine conferences that start somewhere else than with "foundations," but could also end up elsewhere than seconding middle-America's preoccupation with popular culture. To indicate an alternative idea of aesthetics, he concluded by giving a three line introduction to Adorno's idea of art as the "unconscious writing of history," a historiography that expresses a process that otherwise simply transpires. In this regard, Kentor referred to the peculiarity that, given what things are, people are not running up and down the halls barking. While "communicative" barking would be Habermasian poli-sci, it is some form of this otherwise unexpressed content that appears in art.

It was not immediately clear to most of the audience what art Kentor meant. Today, the modernism Adorno admired is thoroughly institutionalized and integrated in banks and insurance companies, as well as museums. In fact, art as a realm of authenticity above and beyond the all-pervasive ideology of "the totally administered society" may have become the most inflated notion of traditional Critical Theory. At any rate, Kentor's message was that the function of a Critical Theory reconstituted beyond current misreadings of Adorno or fashionable linguistifications of being must find ways to focus on suffering and institutionalized inhumanity rather than talk it away in an interminable search for an elusive consensus.

Rather than reading from his prepared text, Paul Piccone chose to elaborate on some of Kentor's remarks about "barking." He agreed that the problem with "the totally administered society" is indeed inadequate barking, but he did not thereby conclude that more barking (or even some biting) would really threaten that society. In line with the artificial negativity thesis, he

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claimed that today more barking and biting can only translate into internal control mechanisms for an otherwise increasingly irrational bureaucratic apparatus. The present myriads of micro-crises exploding throughout the system are essentially rationality crises precipitated by the erosion of internal control mechanisms hitherto able to regulate all-pervasive bureaucracies. As a result, there is an increase in the system's irrationality, which thereby creates conditions conducive to new and even more serious crises. Today's Catch-22 is that the decline of radical thought translates into systemic crises remediable only through increased radicalism or "barking." Even the resulting government sponsorship of this badly needed in-house (or on-campus) radicalism becomes inherently counterproductive, since it readily degenerates into an appendix to that very bureaucratic apparatus it is meant to rationalize. This position in the past has been criticized on the ground that it *a priori* rules out any kind of radical politics and reduces subjects to reified entities unable to act freely. But if radical politics in the sense of qualitatively changing the present system is in fact objectively impossible because of the way the system automatically instrumentalizes autonomous social action, then it is actually a realistic rather than a pessimistic position.

Having shown that Kentor's call for more social barking is not likely to result in any real biting but only in licking the system clean, Piccone finally tackled his assigned task of answering the question (also the title of his paper): "Does Critical Theory need a Foundation?" He rejected the question as misformulated, since it presupposes that Critical Theory is comparable to a building yet to be constructed. Today, however, Critical Theory is more like an abandoned theoretical edifice infested by linguistifying squatters and in terrible disrepair. Thus what is needed is something closer to a "gut rehab" of an edifice which not only was constructed decades ago but, like so many other grand old buildings, was badly remodelled during the 1950s and 60s by haphazard efforts to blend it in with the rest of the academic neighborhood.

According to Piccone, communication theory has not only trivialized Critical Theory but has also generated a whole series of wrong forecasts concerning the direction of modern society during the past decade and a half. The growing rationalization forecast in *Legitimation Crisis* and subsequent writings has not happened, no legitimation crises have exploded in the West, skills and techniques (but apparently not prejudices and old accounts) have in fact been irretrievably forgotten in Eastern Europe under the impact of sovietization, and growing participation in consensus formation has given way to increasing exclusion by an ever more powerful and unresponsive bureaucratic apparatus. Compared to this record of failure of Panglossian projections, matched only by the new communication theory's inability to produce anything beyond duplicating arguments and results obtained elsewhere in the established disciplines, the projections made on the basis of the artificial negativity analysis have turned out much more accurate. The increasing involution of bureaucratic apparatuses has proceeded as fast as projected; the disintegration of

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the Soviet empire to a series of junior partners *vis à vis* the West is rapidly becoming a historical fact; almost every kind of internal opposition in the West has been integrated and legitimated by the system (first and foremost, whatever remained of Critical Theory) with no significant system rationalization or amelioration of existing pathologies; while inequality, injustice and irrationality are ever more pervasive.

In the way of examples, Piccone pointed out that, after 30 years of civil rights legislation and affirmative action, the lives of Blacks and women as a whole, with the exception of small upwardly mobile subgroups, have not only not improved substantially but have further deteriorated with the explosion of homelessness and the feminization of poverty; no significant Left or Right opposition remains in the political domain; and today the US President can present himself as an "ecologist" able to publicly quantify the cost of managing an ecologically viable system by eliminating acid rain, cleaning the oceans, etc. All radical demands readily reduce to questions of dollars and cents to be budgeted in and passed on to understandably recalcitrant taxpayers

As for foundations, within such an historicized context the point is neither to look for transcendental ones — a residual theological prejudice which, in the age of postmodernism, does not escape the charge of circularity and ethnocentricity — nor to avoid foundational questions altogether as if they were irrelevant. Rather, following D'Amico's proposal of historically and situationally grounded rational reconstructions, Piccone suggested that foundations be treated exactly the same way. As anyone who has ever reconstructed a building knows all too well, the problem of foundation does not arise at the beginning but well after one has determined what the end product should be. Only after all other details are already prefigured does it become necessary to determine what sort of foundation one needs to sustain the desired framework. Thus efforts to deduce universally binding ethical norms from the absolute presuppositions of all possible discourses or to ground all noematic structure on an apodictic noesis, etc., appear as scholastic exercises of marginal academic interest. A third wave of Critical Theory, if it succeeds in coalescing into a movement, will have to begin recultivating that same pragmatic soil Horkheimer's *The Eclipse of Reason* mistakingly encouraged all subsequent critical theorists to abandon.

Political Theory and Critical Theory

Having presumably settled questions of foundations, the next panel sought to tackle political questions. Although the linguistified reconstruction of Critical Theory had legitimated its break with the founding fathers on the ground that the latter, mired in a hopeless pessimism and a terminally aporetic *cul de sac*, could not provide any possible political direction, a quarter of a century of intense elaboration of communication theory does not seem to have achieved any enviable results. Discourse ethics yields, at best, only a new but not substantially improved version of traditional liberalism, where property ownership as

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a precondition for participation is now replaced by linguistic competence and a new set of implicit exclusionary mechanisms. As for the normative dimension, the results are even more disappointing and outright conservative, since all communication theory can propose is a renewed defense of universal bourgeois values deemed as yet unrealized. Whereas the Marxist tradition and classical Critical Theory held that the social practice of capitalist society gradually undermined the universality of these values and degraded them to a mere ideological role concealing their very opposite, communication theory translates the objectivistic artificial distinction between labor and interaction into a sharp ontological separation of economics and politics, thus redefining what hitherto appeared as a system-crisis into merely an *economic* one manageable by means of welfare and regulatory legislation. Since the political dimension is now seen as altogether independent of its economic otherness, the universally valid values of modernity can be upheld in the political sphere, independently of what happens in the economy. In other words, its protestation to the contrary notwithstanding, communication theory turns into another apology for the welfare state and its corollary New Class ideology. Any new version of Critical Theory will have to begin by rethinking political theory on the basis of paradigms qualitatively different from the two predominant versions of the democratic one: liberal democracy and bureaucratic collectivism.

In order to begin doing so, Gary Ulmen reexamined the relation between Critical Theory and politics in terms of the recent collapse of political paradigms in the wake of East European events and the project of West European integration in 1992. In both cases the starting point is the decline of the European sovereign state — the most successful geopolitical paradigm of the modern age — and the decline of the two superpowers. Since the bipolar balance of power which replaced the Eurocentric international order (the *jus publicum Europaeum*) after WWII has now also collapsed and is being replaced by a new system of economic blocs (or, to use Schmitt's terminology, *Grossräume*), of which the European model is in the forefront, the world is on the verge of a major reorganization. These geopolitical changes are inextricably connected to the crisis of the two predominant democratic paradigms — the authoritarian one in the East and the representative one in the West — which seem to be collapsing from within and to which there does not seem to be any meaningful alternative. Ulmen further emphasized that, although the collapse of "people's" democracy in the East does not necessarily imply the collapse of its "liberal" counterpart in the West, the latter is also in crisis. Just as the identification of "the party" with "the people" has proven economically and politically unfeasible, so the representative model has turned into a bureaucratic screen for special New Class interests in the context of a largely depoliticized polity. On both sides, the political *form* has been undermined by the economic *substance*. Here it is not a matter of economics replacing politics but of economics becoming political.

A reconstituted Critical Theory can be of help here, according to Ulmen, in

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the development of a political perspective able to articulate the new problems brought about by the collapse of the bipolar division of the world and the projected European economic integration. Although Critical Theory is much broader than political theory — a more restricted field concerned primarily with *order* rather than *change* — it can help provide new categories essential to a political approach adequate to the new historical situation. Unless such new categories are developed, there is a danger of uncritically accepting traditional categories and, consequently, as was the case with the second generation of critical theorists, ending up rediscovering the wheel of neo-liberalism. Ulmen closed with a warning against a facile identification of Critical Theory with political theory, which would not only impoverish the former by unnecessarily restricting it but may also shorten that distance between criticism and *Realpolitik* which is essential to prevent capitulation to the logic of the reified given.

"The Fate of the Democratic Paradigm" was the title of Susan Buck-Morss' presentation — part of a longer work in progress. She warned that the two concepts, "democracy" and "sovereignty," do not readily mesh. Throughout the modern era, the legitimacy of political sovereignty has been based on the claim of the sovereign agency (whether Communist Party or nation-state) to rule in the name of "the people." But the power to wage war against an "enemy" — the mark of political sovereignty — leads to a paradox. The democratic sovereign agent is able to claim as legitimate the unchecked exercise of violence. The real consequence of the right to violence — even terror — against the "enemy" (either within or without) is that actual people are confronted with a wild zone of sovereign power (the war zone) over which they can exercise no sovereignty, but which, as the legitimate defender of "the people," has a claim over their very lives. Thus she warned of a common danger within both capitalist and communist regimes: the paradox of absolute power within modern sovereignties.

Buck-Morss went on to elaborate the nature of the two constellations of sovereign legitimacy (state/party), collective identity (nation/class), and the perception of the nature of war (national war/class war) — in particular the perception of their different valorization of space and time as the terrain of war (territorial victory/historical victory). In the wake of the Cold War, there is a destabilizing dynamic *within* each system stemming from a contradiction between the political legitimation of the sovereign regime and actual economic conditions. Thus the Communist Party, the political "vanguard" of history, has been attempting to hold on to power within an economic situation that has increasingly fallen behind the West. Similarly, the nation-state system attempts to maintain its hegemony within a global capitalism that increasingly threatens to escape the control of nation-state political units. In the USSR and Eastern Europe the internal contradiction between "vanguard" party and economic underdevelopment has already led to crisis. But this does not mean the West will be spared the results of its own contradiction. The tension between nation-state sovereignty and the transnational economy is already erupting in political crisis in debates over German reunification and the proposed

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European Community. Ironically, as for the US, with the end of the Cold War the "class struggle" is experiencing a renaissance among the social casualties of multinational capital, now that the USSR has officially stopped articulating it, and can no longer be branded as unpatriotically pro-Soviet.

The constitution of this new perspective, however, is only possible after the political implications of earlier versions of Critical Theory have been made clearer than they presently are. This was the theme of Florindo Volpacchio's paper. He pointed out how Critical Theory or, more specifically, its communication theory variant, has become increasingly identified with democratic theory and participatory politics, while in fact recycling traditional versions of liberalism that fail to address the problem of the constitution of the subject in post-industrial societies. This association, however, runs contrary to Critical Theory's original position as developed, e.g., in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, which argues that the very values of the Enlightenment precipitated their eventual corruption as well as the current cultural crisis. In other words, the emergence of public opinion and individualism, i.e., that abstract individualism which identified with the ideals of the Enlightenment and gave rise to the bourgeois public sphere, have their foundation in the rise of the modern marketplace and are responsible for the corruption of the "public sphere."

Thus not only is Critical Theory incompatible with current notions of democratic theory, but Habermas' old concept of the public sphere (1962) does not take sufficiently into account how that institution, defined by Enlightenment principles, cannot function independently of capitalist relations. The subsequent decoupling of politics and economics following the linguistic turn of the mid-60s does not eliminate the problem, since politics itself is no longer the free process of consensus formation arrived at by means of undistorted communication (something obtaining, at best, only among intellectuals discussing academic issues in seminar rooms), but *spectacular* politics for a public whose identity is constituted by consumption patterns orchestrated by the culture industry. Social identity is thus a function of consumption, and political participation becomes identical with participation in the consumer culture. Within such a context, traditional politics either becomes meaningless, since the citizen presupposed by either traditional liberalism or communication theory simply no longer exists, or else turns into New Class ideology, since the only people qualifying as competent speakers in post-industrial societies are those presumed to have technical expertise. To defend democracy and participation thus becomes tantamount to defending the administration of society through the culture industry. Any future political theory pretending to be minimally emancipatory will henceforth have to focus on the possibility of creating new social and cultural conditions within which subjectivity can find a moral basis in institutional forms and, as such, engage in active political life rather than merely responding to skillful media manipulation.

Such a wide variety of presentations did not allow for a systematic discussion of particular issues. The remaining hour was spent clarifying points such

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as what Ulmen meant by political theory, which allowed him to make a strong plea for keeping it separate from Critical Theory; the accuracy of Buck-Morss' Soviet historiography; Volpacchio's notion of needs in a "totally administered society," etc. Although many questions remained, it was clear that the future of Critical Theory hinged on whether it is possible at this time to cut through the mystifications, regressions and conformist accomodations of the last couple of decades and undertake once again a kind of analysis able to grasp the new historical situation in its originality and elaborate whatever new possibilities it might offer.

Cultural and Political Movements

Tim Luke began the second day of the conference with a paper titled "Still an Age of Artificial Negativity?" dealing with the current political situation of the post-Cold War US. Working within the context of artificial negativity, he outlined the nature of the "new" imperialism — one no longer based on direct economic exploitation or political control but on cultural hegemony. Elaborating a theoretical position similar to Volpacchio's, Luke argued that by mediating the individuals' concretization of the objects of desire, which presumably satisfies their otherwise relatively simple needs, the culture industry succeeds in creating a spontaneous demand for precisely the commodities the system can most profitably provide. Domination as such is no longer an external imposition over and above the resistance of the targeted victims, but something now "naturally" demanded by its subjects. A system that can readily provide Coca-Cola and McDonalds no longer needs to deploy the Marines. Given the structure of unequal international exchange, today exploitation obtains merely through the existence of a "free trade" where the odds are overwhelmingly in favor of the most advanced societies.

Luke's seemingly positive evaluation of the options open to cybernetic capitalism for further expansion was balanced by a relatively negative evaluation of the meaning of the end of the Cold War. Contrary to the ideological analyses of the US mass media, which see democratization as the moving force behind the demise of communism, he focused instead on the bureaucratic collectivist system's inability to shift from labor-intensive to capital-intensive production as a result of overbureaucratization and the system's increasing lack of any regulatory mechanisms able to guarantee a minimum of internal rationality. Efforts to reverse this situation immediately after Stalin's death never materialized. After Brezhnev's counterrevolution put an end to Khrushchev's timid reform efforts, bureaucratic stagnation simply drained the country of any resources and precipitated the major crisis which, although intensified by Reagan's remilitarization strategy, was ultimately inevitable. The problem is that the cancer of bureaucracy eating away at Soviet-type societies is not merely a communist disease, but, to a lesser extent, is also destroying the US and making it less and less internationally competitive. Thus *perestroika* is needed in the US as much as in the USSR.

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Luke argued that, unlike Japan, where premodern cultural otherness remains a plentiful source of organic negativity, the US has exhausted its reservoir and is having trouble making do with artificial substitutes. More generally, the Cold War was not won by the West but lost by the East. The failure in production is matched by an even greater failure in distribution. What has been aptly called "the dictatorship over needs" in bureaucratic collectivist societies did not match the Western culture industry's ability to effectively mediate consumers' consciousness so that it would objectify human needs precisely in terms of what the system could provide. Thus low rents, cheap staples and classical music — meant primarily to alleviate suffering and raise cultural consciousness to unbearably high levels — turned out to be no match for Nintendo, blue jeans and rock & roll, which mythologize libido and appeal to freedom rather than its dark underside, necessity. Given this state of affairs, the integration of Eastern Europe and the USSR into the Western capitalist system does not promise much beyond the further extension of the present predicament. The only difference is that formerly communist countries will enter only by way of a long phase of Thirdworldification, during which the inability to displace the old and introduce the new with sufficient speed will generate probably as high a human cost as the original phase of industrialization. The mechanical transposition of McDonalds to Moscow is likely to precipitate the creation of new "McGulags" exibiting most of the shortcomings of the old system and hardly any of the advantages of the new.

Dismissing liberal hopes that the end of the Cold War will usher in a rosy future, Luke took up issues already raised by Ulmen and Buck-Morss concerning the identity crisis the US is bound to run into once the "other" through which it has long constituted its political identity collapses. As Ulmen pointed out in elaborating Schmitt's analysis, the new "other" today is likely to be the two economic *Grossräume* which have been successfully competing with the US at least since the end of the Vietnam War: East Asia and an economically unified Europe (since the latter is still in the planning stage, it is the former that today is increasingly coming to fill the role of the new "enemy"). As the US "loses" to Japan, Luke prefigured a process of Japanization in which the US attempts to discipline itself along the lines of its Asian neighbors. Thus he focused on a new disciplinary strategy aimed at recalcitrant social strata being deployed in culture, as evidenced by the new war on drugs and the call to return to the family and other traditional values. The latter, however, may well be beside the point, since in a society with no internal opposition, repression is superfluous and recalcitrant subgroups such as the underclass, mired as they are in drugs, alcoholism and psychic disorders, tend to function as negative legitimating entities for a system which can no longer point to the threat posed by the unfreedom of communism as its *raison d'être*.

Ken Anderson seemed somewhat displeased by Luke's pessimism, which he interpreted as a defining characteristic of *Telos* both as a journal and as a group seeking to provide a distinctive new social theory of advanced industrial

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societies. He formulated his misgivings in terms of a paradox. According to Anderson, every time something positive seems to appear on the horizon, *Telos* rushes to show its hidden counterproductive side, how it is already instrumentalized by the system it seeks to challenge and change, and otherwise finds ways to attack and dismiss it. Thus the powerful critique *Telos* has waged has led to a political pessimism and passivity, not altogether different from that of the founding fathers before Critical Theory took the linguistic turn. After it was objected that the "activism" and "optimism" generated by communication theory has resulted in nothing more than a weak recycling of liberalism and, at best, a redundant bureaucratic practice, Anderson retreated and argued that it seems as if all the journal will publish is negative evaluations and that maybe material should not be rejected merely because it is optimistic or positive. He pleaded for efforts to deal with concrete politics and to locate positive features within a social reality which simply cannot be as bleak as critical theorists present it.

Nanette Funk followed Anderson's advice and went on to tackle one of the most hotly debated social policies, Affirmative Action. She explained resistance to this program in terms of Adorno's and Horkheimer's discussion, particularly in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, of the Enlightenment tendency to privilege the universal at the expense of the particular. She argued that objections to Affirmative Action are based on a pseudo-universalism. Although she did not argue that there is in force today a policy of promoting homogeneity or conformity, she did claim that it played a role in patterns of thought. This is why socially and morally relevant differences between Blacks and whites are not given adequate attention, which results in unwarranted criticisms of Affirmative Action. As an example, she focused on the objection by members of white ethnic groups, e.g., Jews or Italians, that they also have had to fight for jobs. Consequently, there is no reason for Blacks to get preferential treatment in hiring. Such an objection ignores the immense differences in Black and white ethnic group histories, i.e., it was only Blacks that suffered lynchings, were continually relegated to the worst and most dangerous jobs in the least successful industries, and through waves of immigration by other groups, were continually marginalized, etc. Lack of attention to these differences can be partly explained by taking the experiences of the dominant group (whites) as the standard to be subsequently applied to everyone else, and partly by the belief in the ideology of equality, confusing this normative ideal with empirical reality. Similarly, Adorno's and Horheimer's insight that Western thought privileges the universal over the particular carries over to common sense judgments. Funk also pointed out that objections to Affirmative Action, to the effect that it violates meritocracy, are based on an excessive emphasis on preference given to Blacks, coupled with remarkable ignorance as to how whites are *regularly* preferred through normal processes of hiring and promotion, e.g., seniority, "Old Boy" networks, etc. She concluded by objecting to the charge that social movements are particularisticrather than universal. According

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to Funk, Black movements have historically spawned social movements of other groups, and social movements advance their demands on the basis of universal principles.

The problem with this analysis, according to Warren Habib, is that Affirmative Action presupposes precisely that same homogenizing Enlightenment strategy it is allegedly meant to reverse. Not only is its ultimate *manifest* objective the homogenization of all otherness to blend unobtrusively in a pervasive universality, thus perpetuating under a radical banner the dialectic of enlightenment and all its traditional problems, but its *latent* function is to legally reify racial stigma as particularity and thereby to prevent its eventual elimination. Affirmative Action manages to realize the worst of both worlds without reaping any of the benefits. Far from empowering minorities, it only benefits a minor middle-class subgroup while strengthening the bureaucratic apparatus deployed to administer it and reifying racial divisions. Horkheimer and Adorno's position, as developed in the section on anti-Semitism in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, was inextricably rooted in a New Deal reality which they saw as the benign American version of fascism and Stalinism. Thus it put forth a defense of particularity and otherness as sources of negativity in a context in which they knew very well the culture industry had already homogenized or destroyed any such recalcitrant entities. What at that time appeared as a losing battle to salvage whatever residual difference and specificity escaped the claws of the all-encompassing culture industry, in the age of artificial negativity efforts to reconstitute an artificial otherness ultimately feed into the logic of the system without substantially affecting inequality, injustice or suffering. When the state itself encourages the reconstitution of long-gone ethnic, religious and other identities in order to constitute a *de facto* corporate system able to generate enough internal conflictuality to rationalize the administrative apparatus, negativity is inexorably trapped. Thus traditional Critical Theory's efforts to salvage the particular ends up counterproductive in that it reinforces precisely the conditions responsible for a system of postmodern domination.

Moving on to another topic, David Ost focused on "Social Movements and the End of Empires," specifically the impact of recent events on the character of East European social movements. These are movements that, for over a decade now, have captured the imagination of the Western Left. Not surprisingly, they have appealed to critical theorists as well. Habermasians were enamored by the movements' understanding of politics as anti-politics. As elaborated by theorists such as Michnik, Konrad and Havel, politics was not about power and domination but about openness and communication. The democratic polity meant a radically pluralist society centered in an open political public sphere. For all of their institutional vagueness, these movements promised a democratic communitarianism. For post-Habermasian critical theorists, meanwhile, the East European movements seemed to demonstrate the emancipatory potential of culture. Because these movements were unable to integrate themselves into the system, there could be no question of artificial

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negativity here. Consequently, voices seemed to matter — or, to use the language of the previous day's discussion, "barking" was the same thing as "biting" (and the identification of the two is something all critics seem to yearn for). Not even the most pessimistic Adornoite could suppress all hope when they saw cultural figures and cultural activities making a political impact Western Leftists could only dream about.

As now becomes all too clear, however, the problem was that these movements were ultimately held together only by the Leninist party-state. By monopolizing politics and outlawing independent social activity, Leninism forced these movements to embrace anti-political politics and challenge power with culture. And so now, as Gorbachev demolishes the empire and Leninism collapses, the East European movements have lost their universalist identity. Forced to come up with specific political programs, they lose their critical dimension and begin a process seen time and again in Western social movements: principles of universality are replaced by the pursuit of particularistic goals. In time East European movements may, like their Western counterparts, come to facilitate a legitimation of the *status quo* thus turning into artificial negativity. The Eastern experience raises the sobering possibility that a fully authentic negativity may be possible only under conditions of intense repression.

Once again, the heterogeneity of the topics discussed as well as the amount of material presented in a rather hurried fashion did not permit a very structured elaboration of particular themes. Thus the ensuing discussion tended to range over a number of issues, without focusing on any one in depth. It was clear, however, that, except for some unwarranted hopes in the efficacy of particular government policies such as Affirmative Action (whose admitted failure in ameliorating the lot of Blacks and women *as a whole* was not interpreted by their advocates as evidence of inherent flaws but as the result of ruling class efforts to contain it), the future of social movements as agencies of radical change was bleak. What this means for a Critical Theory seeking to avoid mainstreaming into the logic of the given, as has been the case with some communication theoreticians desperately idealizing a mythical civil society as the inexhaustible source of goodness, beauty and virtue is that, as Ulmen suggested earlier, a substantial distance be kept between Critical Theory and concrete politics.

The Changing Character of the Culture Industry

The fact that cultural problems were scheduled for discussion at the very end of the conference was not meant to convey the impression that, as Kentor complained, culture is essentially mass culture — a level high above the foundations and the intervening floors (politics, etc.) of the edifice of Critical Theory. As Volpacchio and Luke argued, culture today is as crucial a social dimension as economics was for classical Critical Theory, and as politics became for communication theory. Appropriately, Russell Berman focused precisely on the changing character of the culture industry and the growing

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relevance of popular culture as a possible tool of a new form of domination by asking the central question: how is *today*'s culture industry different from Adorno's and Horkheimer's time? His answer was that the homogenizing thrust of the New Deal to produce standardized and predictable consumers required by nascent mass markets — the other side of the interchangeable abstract producers required by Fordism and mass production — has now been reversed. Heterogenization and pluralization had successfully replaced homogenization and standardization as cultural objectives, but only in order to better carry out the same general mandate of helping constitute the kind of social identities the system needed to run profitably. In the age of artificial negativity, it is the "other" that needs to be created and encouraged to remain other in order to generate that minimal negativity the system needs to rationalize itself (rather than the white, middle-class, phallocratic ideal of the 1940s). Thus Berman pointed to the diversity of the present day culture industry: where previously TV seemed to focus almost entirely on white middle-class nuclear families ("Leave it to Beaver" or "Father Knows Best"), most prime time programs now center on working class, Black, and single parent families. There are a million different styles to choose from — all equally acceptable. Yet the objective remains the same: to project socially necessary identities as desirable models for mass emulation.

To exemplify concretely this state of affairs, Berman analyzed the saga of the Panamanian dictator, Manuel Noriega, who was eventually flushed out of the papal *nuncio* where he had sought refuge by means of unrelenting blasts of rock & roll. The point was that, far from constituting anything emancipatory *vis à vis* presumably "conservative" high culture, popular culture is well integrated in the predominant system of domination. Contrary to residual Left conventional wisdom, none of these easy categorizations make much sense any more. Within such a context, it is useless to defend sharp divisions between society and the university, or to defend any canon, be it the Right or Left variety. Education should not be policed but, rather, left to free choice. At any rate, efforts to impose particular requirements usually conceal agendas concerned with filling space in classrooms where boring or otherwise unpopular courses are taught. The problem here, however, is that this seemingly libertarian attitude presupposes that students already know enough to be able to make reasoned choices concerning these matters, i.e., that they already know enough to make judgments about what they in fact have yet to learn. Yet Berman's *laissez faire* pedagogy had already been put to the test throughout the 1960s and 1970s, with disastrous results. On the one hand, it had produced scores of miserably ignorant or miseducated graduates, while, on the other, it had wrecked a number of previously viable educational institutions such as Antioch College.

In sharp contrast to Berman, Frank Adler — who happens to teach at Antioch College — defended a traditional vision of the university as a locus for the pursuit of excellence. He saw this premodern institution threatened by the bureaucratic encroachment of Affirmative Action policies. According to Adler,

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the university is being politicized both internally and externally, resulting in the destruction of its specific character. Both internal criticisms of Western culture as a screen for phallocentric white male values and the externally-inspired bureaucratic reforms of Affirmative Action threaten the possibility of an autonomous university in which truth is pursued as the ultimate end. This defense of the autonomy and apolitical character of hopelessly bureaucratized and irreversibly politicized institutions such as universities was attacked as unbearably elitist — to the point that, exasperated, Buck-Morss threatened to repeat the famous stunt pulled by some female students on Adorno shortly before his death: to walk by the podium topless. (To everyone's disappointment, and over Adler's protest, she took his alleged youth and her maternal instinct into account and decided against it).

Although Adler had criticized as corporatist and naive Bourdieu's recent call for a trade-union of intellectuals as agents of universality, he seemed to endorse the argument's underlying assumption that intellectuals are something special and therefore entitled to privileges not accessible to everyone else. As a number of discussants pointed out afterwards, intellectuals not only no longer deal with "excellence" and "the good life" — *pace* Jacoby's *The Last Intellectuals* — but those few rare remaining ones have no real place in universities. The real question is not whether universities should be isolated from social pathologies such as Affirmative Action policies, which intensify precisely the problems they seek to resolve (this battle was lost long ago), but whether it is possible to salvage a minimal tolerance within universities for marginal intellectual activity. While qualitative criteria of competence, craftmanship, productivity, etc. remain essential to the functioning of universities as well as any other goal-oriented organizations, mere talk of "excellence" independently of any historically particular socio-political location sounds either vacuous or inevitably internal to specific narratives and thereby tainted by particular cultural biases.

Taking up Berman's discussion of how heterogeneity has been co-opted by the culture industry, David Pan discussed whether an artifact of the culture industry, in spite of itself, could retain genuine heterogeneity, i.e., qualitatively unique elements in an otherwise one-dimensional field. This heterogeneity is not mere diversity but embodies "spirit" understood not as pure expression (the culture industry's version) but Hegel's "objective spirit"; the by-product of history as human activity constituting new traditions. In terms of artifacts, this notion of objective spirit contains the relation of the artifact to the social order and the past. Using *Metropolis* and *Blade Runner* to exemplify the changing character of the culture industry, he showed how this spirit is present in both films. In *Metropolis*, spirit as pure expression is inextricably tied to objective spirit as collective activity and a quasi-religious notion of redemption in history. Notwithstanding the film's final subversion of objective spirit as a viable emancipatory category, it is possible to differentiate the two moments of spirit and thus recuperate genuine heterogeneity, if only as an inconsistency.

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In the case of *Blade Runner*, artificiality is the source of heterogeneity. The film resembles *Metropolis* in that it also criticizes a bureaucratic repressive order ultimately tamed by a harmonious ending which affirms that order. It differs from *Metropolis* in that libidinal fulfillment displaces traditional repressive family structures as the stabilizing element. Whereas the orgiastic revelry unleashed by the robot is condemned in *Metropolis*, another 1980s recuperation of *Metropolis* — the Madonna music video "Express Yourself" — demands such an expression of libidinal energy. Yet the corollary to the new culture industry's project of expression rather than repression is a notion of spirit more de-politicized than the earlier one.

Pan tied the culture industry's appeal to "expression" in the 1980s to the Left charismatic project of the 1960s, which has deteriorated into Todd Gitlin's advocacy of "expressive politics." Gitlin's defense of expression as emancipatory ignores and consequently submits to the culture industry's subversion of objective spirit into an ahistorical and de-politicized exercise. The flip-side of this undifferentiated embracing of what the culture industry markets as spirit is the elitist attempt, exemplified by Allan Bloom, to ban in the same undifferentiated way, *all* spirit. In Bloom's case the attempt to ban all traces of the culture industry from the university is tied to his attempts to isolate culture and the university from lived experience. Against both these critics of the culture industry, Pan concluded by calling for alternatives to a linguistic, bureaucratic order whose reproduction now hinges on the encouragement rather than the repression of expression.

The Conference organizer, Paul Gottfried, spoke last and challenged the attempt to depict the struggle between Bloom and his critics as one between cultural traditionalists and educational progressives. He maintained that Bloom's worldview is that of a Cold War liberal who praises the US for imposing on others its own conception of democratic equality. The conflict between those advocating or opposing "Western Civilization" curriculae is one between defenders and critics of the present American democratic state as a model for other societies, rather than one between those who prefer Plato to Confucius or vice versa. Gottfried also pointed out a basic conflict within *Telos*, already foreshadowed by the New Left, between traditionalist and anti-traditionalist critics of the managerial welfare state. Traditionalists attack the welfare state for subverting community and organic social ties; non-traditionalists charge that the managerial state has derailed its own revolutionary project, and sanctions sexism, racism, and economic inequalities. The conflict comes out most clearly in discussions of civil rights and feminism.

This same issue was the focus of the closing general discussion Sunday morning. Unavoidably, political questions concerning the role of the family, education, social movements, etc. kept falling into traditional divisions of Left vs. Right, or liberals vs. conservatives, notwithstanding frequent reminders that these divisions no longer make much sense in the changed political climate. Much more relevant was the conference's general prefiguring of the

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possibilities opened up by the artificial negativity framework. Already the *Telos* elaboration of many pressing contemporary issues seems more promising than competing standard analyses. Thus the critique of modernity, growing out of Husserlian phenomenology, provides a far more convincing interpretation of the nature of individual subjectivity, the inner logic of meta-narratives, and the state of ethical values than any postmodern presentation from Derrida, Foucault, Jameson or Lyotard. Similarly, analyses of the crisis in Eastern Europe, the resurrection of Germany and *Mitteleuropa*, the collapse of the USSR as a superpower, and the attempted reconstruction of American global hegemony through cybernetic-informational modes of production constitute a promising new perspective. *Telos*' openness to unknown, ignored or outlawed approaches to many philosophical and political questions, which more conventional organs systematically avoid, has brought controversial and unorthodox insights into public debate from alternative thinkers ranging from Baudrillard, Heidegger and Bobbio to Husserl, Schmitt and Kosik.

Yet, as the conference participants discovered, there is still much barking and biting to be done. As permanent crises become the norm in the globalization of corporate capitalism, and as previous sources of opposition and traditional means of social control are readily integrated by the administrative apparatus, re-engineering of internal opposition provides some semblance of order within unanticipated, unintended and unforseeable circumstances. The dynamics of current state-corporate regimes, as they flex their muscles through the culture industry, global Fordism, the welfare state, transnational capitalism or the destruction of the environment, remain to be spelled out more concretely in terms of a third generation of Critical Theory. Likewise, the apolitical and uncritical traps of postmodern interpretations of the present social order also need to be systematically countered with the artificial negativity analysis of contemporary culture and potential subjectivity. With the end of the Cold War and the realignment of nations and trade into the three *Grossräume* (East Asia, Europe and the Western Hemisphere), an entirely new vision of the capitalist world-system needs to be articulated, taking into consideration the impact of *perestroika* on the American and Soviet blocs as Japanese and European power increases. Finally, artificial negativity thinking needs to reevaluate the cultural and political implications of its own positions, asking what kind of transformative radical action is possible and how much influence it might have, given the unending instumentalization of negativity by the prevailing order.

On a more theoretical level, major philosophical questions remain to be addressed. In the case of the original Frankfurt School, philosophy involved primarily a kind of Lukácsian historical analysis of philosophical categories and the assumption that traditional philosophical problems — the distinction of mental and physical acts, theory of knowledge and problems of free action — would be dissolved by a dialectical analysis. The second generation, however, found both historicism and the dialectic inadequate to combat relativism and

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skepticism. The project of a Critical Theory for the 21st century will probably involve abandoning a good deal of its traditional approach to philosophy. Unwittingly, Critical Theory shared the hope of the logical positivists that once and for all, by some intellectual tool, philosophy could be reformed, freed from its past and made "scientific." On the contrary, philosophical problems are the only access to the deep presuppositions and constraints upon reasoning that are necessarily part of the historical location of thinking. Thinking cannot find "the view from nowhere" and secure its foundation for substantive positions. Of course, it is always possible to find narrowly abstract or formal properties of thought that are preconditions for any historical episteme, but the Habermasian pursuit of these preconditions as the sole important contribution of philosophy unnecessarily constricts the philosophical range of Critical Theory.

Though there is yet no clear alternative to Critical Theory's traditional historicism versus its newer linguistic formalism, valuable work in Critical Theory, understood as sustained critical reflection on the presuppositions of theoretical work, can be done on phenomenology, pragmatism, positivism, history of science, and epistemology. Freed from a sole concern with exposition and the self-imposed demand to adhere to pseudo-Marxist or neo-Kantian categories, this work could be the focus of important future contributions by a third generation of critical theorists.

Norberto Bobbio at 80

Frank Adler

On October 18, 1989 Norberto Bobbio celebrated his eightieth birthday, a milestone marked by extensive discussions regarding his life, his intellectual contributions in general, and particularly his celebrated reflections on the themes of socialism and democracy. Longevity is obviously not the sole factor making Bobbio so unique, though few scholars have remained productive for more than five decades (his first publications date back to 1934 and he remains intellectually active today). Rather, Bobbio is perhaps *the* vital link between an amazing generation of intellectuals which came of age in Italy during the 1920s

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(Gramsci, Gobetti, Rosselli) and contemporary discussions of pluralism, liberalism and the "new" social democracy. Bobbio's life has bridged such transitional stages as participation in the anti-fascist resistance (first with *Giustizia e Libertà*, then with the *Partito d'Azione*), the formation of a democratic republic in Italy after WWII, and a thirty-year, mostly amicable debate with communist intellectuals on the theory and practice of democracy which Bobbio ultimately won hands down (i.e., Italian communist leaders and intellectuals have generally adopted the very positions Bobbio took against Togliatti during the 1950s on the nature of "really existing socialism," the essential and enduring value of "bourgeois rights and liberties," and the perception of socialism as an extension rather than a negation of liberalism).

One might say that events have finally caught up with Bobbio, given the amazing political transformations which have occurred in Europe during the past year: what remains of socialism is its linkage with liberalism and its formal negation of Marxism — particularly Marxism-Leninism. Bobbio's themes have become Europe's themes, and this marks his special significance. For more than fifty years Bobbio has been the principal bearer of that special strain in Italian thought and action known as *Socialismo Liberale* — a quite distinctive non-Marxist strain of socialism committed to overcoming the limitations of liberalism and Marxism.

To understand or at least to get at the roots of Bobbio's intellectual formation, one has to return to 1920s Turin, which had displaced Florence as the intellectual center of Italy — at least so far as the young generation was concerned. Turin had been associated with Italian liberalism from Cavour to Einaudi. It became associated with Marxism in response to rapid industrialization (particularly the automobile industry) and the development of a powerful, self-conscious labor movement. Yet by the early 1920s both liberalism and Marxism were in crisis and soon fascism would come to power. The crisis of Marxism was the crisis of the Second International: the crisis of a positivist, determinist, fatalist doctrine which had failed all significant political tests (it failed to prevent WWI, it failed to pull off a revolution despite the presence of "objective conditions" in the post-war period, and it failed to contain fascism). The crisis of liberalism consisted in its inability to adapt itself to an age of mass politics, to universalize itself beyond the narrow interests of the bourgeoisie and its failure to oppose fascism.

In reaction to these twin crises, Turin saw the development of two youthful movements, each associated with a journal, each aimed respectively at reconstituting Marxism and liberalism. The first was *Ordine Nuovo*, the communist group led by Gramsci and identified with the factory council movement. Marxism for this group was an anti-positivist, Hegelian "philosophy of praxis," which stressed self-creation, culture and subjectivity. The second was *Rivoluzione Liberale*, led by Piero Gobetti, which aimed at linking "liberty" with the aspirations of the working class, rather than with the traditional bourgeoisie

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that had become decadent and an obstacle to historical progress. Gobetti's group was more diverse and eclectic than *Ordine Nuovo*; it was not directly engaged in politics but primarily a literary circle including Carlo Rosselli, Ernesto Rossi, Lelio Basso, Carlo Levi, and Luigi Salvatorelli. Despite obvious differences, there were points of contact. Gobetti was a friend of Gramsci and a theater critic for *Ordine Nuovo*, while Gramsci had written for *Energie Nuove* — a journal Gobetti founded in 1918 at the age of seventeen (Gobetti would die at the age of twenty-five). Moreover, both groups separately analyzed fascism as an outcome of the Risorgimento's shortcomings, as a product of failed liberalism. Both groups became part of a joint struggle against fascism; both became part of the city's intellectual and political patrimony.

How does Bobbio fit into this generation of the 1920s? Actually, he was a bit younger than the leading figures; seven years younger than Gobetti, ten years younger than Rosselli, eighteen years younger than Gramsci. He began his university studies in Turin in 1927. By that time special fascist laws had already made opposition illegal; both *Ordine Nuovo* and *Rivoluzione Liberale* had been forced to cease publication. Gobetti was dead and Gramsci was in prison. Carlo Rosselli seems to have been the most formative influence on Bobbio at this stage. Arrested in 1927, in prison in 1928-29, he secretly wrote *Socialismo Liberale*. After escaping in July 1929, he eventually fled to Paris, where this text was published in 1930 and where he co-founded *Giustizia e Libertà*. In 1935, Bobbio joined an anti-fascist group tied to *Giustizia e Libertà* and headed by Vittorio Foa.

A close examination of *Socialismo Liberale* is beyond the scope of this short introductory note, but its central ideas certainly informed Bobbio's perspective. First, it contained a rejection of Marxism on account of its theoretical dogmatism and political illiberalism — the fact that its theory and practice denigrated civil rights and institutionalized liberties. Second, it argued that liberalism need not be understood as the class-specific project of the bourgeoisie in its struggle against feudalism and aristocratic privilege — a project so closely identified with the bourgeoisie as such that it is born and will die with this class. Rosselli argued that liberalism had enduring, universal significance. Though the bourgeoisie was the first bearer of liberalism, other groups, such as the proletariat, would subsequently inherit, extend and universalize it in realizing a socialist ideal.

Rosselli's text was highly suggestive, but somewhat crude and preliminary by scholarly standards. Much of Bobbio's work has been a further elaboration of Rosselli's themes. Seven years before Isaiah Berlin wrote "Two Concepts of Liberty," where he takes credit for having "invented" the idea of "negative liberty," Bobbio had already contraposed *libertà negativa* and *libertà positiva*, signalling the indispensible idea of liberty as *non-impedimento*, as *non-costrizione*. The context within which he developed these themes was a polemic with Togliatti and other communists concerning such subjects as formal versus substantive democracy, artistic and cultural freedom, and the status of "bourgeois liberties." In the

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course of this polemic, Bobbio, very much in Rosselli's spirit, points out Marxism's weaknesses and lacunae, as well as the enduring value of Locke, Mill, Tocqueville and Constant. It is sometimes forgotten that, at the same time Togliatti responded to Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin and the cult of personality by rejecting the Soviet Union as the only socialist model and calling for an "Italian road" to socialism, he defended the idea of a dictatorship of the proletariat, claimed that the Soviet Union, despite Stalin's deformations, was the most democratic nation on the face of the earth, and rejected Western notions of representative democracy and freedom as illusory and transitory.

Bobbio's essays of the 1950s are now contained in *Politica e Cultura*; his essays of the 1970s in *Quale Socialismo?* He argues, for example, that Marx never developed a satisfactory theory of the state. For this reason, little attention was ever given by Marxists to the modalities and institutions of government. There is no Marxist tradition of "good government," or what could conceivably differentiate a good from a bad socialist government. Most important in this regard, there is no basis for a Marxist critique of autocracy. Bobbio sometimes expresses this as the problem of not just *who* rules, but *how* they rule. He asks, e.g., if the so-called People's Democracies are democratic because the "people" presumably govern, or because they govern democratically. Marxism only concerns itself with the former, not the latter. He has questioned Marx's distinction, made most forcefully in *On the Jewish Question*, between "mere" political emancipation, characteristic of liberalism, and "genuine" human emancipation, the transcendence to be accomplished by socialism, asking if the latter can ever be realized without the institutionalized and secured permanence of the former. Continuing Rosselli's point that liberalism is not simply the class-specific project of the bourgeoisie but has enduring significance, Bobbio maintains that the essence of liberalism is the critique of autocratic power and privilege, not simply the legitimation of bourgeois rule. For this reason, liberalism may be seen as an unredeemed project of universal import. Thus emancipatory practice would mean the extension of liberalism beyond the intentions of its initial bearers, the bourgeoisie, not its abolition. In this sense, social democracy for Bobbio represents the unredeemed promise of liberalism. And this has now become the European political question. Quite a vindication for an unrelenting lifelong struggle.

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Democracy — the Threatened Utopia: An Interview with Norberto Bobbio

Peter Glotz and Otto Kallscheuer*

Professor Bobbio, you are considered one of the few great thinkers who has attempted to connect the liberal conception of a necessary limiting of state institutions with the socialist tradition. This "liberal-socialist" position was also one of the most important components of the Italian anti-fascist resistance, the Partito d'Azione. ***How did you come to join that party?***

Of course you know that Carlo Rosselli, one of the leaders of the anti-fascist movement in Paris, founded a movement called *Giustizia e Libertà*. He wrote a book titled *Socialismo Liberale* that was published in Paris in 1930. It was essentially concerned with a criticism of Marxism, especially the Marxist tradition of the Italian Left. Different from the revisionist struggle in German social democracy, there were still revolutionaries as well as reformers in the Italian Socialist Party who considered themselves Marxists. Filippo Turati, the leader of the right-wing Socialists, as well as Giuseppe Saragat, always considered themselves Marxists.

Rosselli's was mainly a philosophical critique of the Marxism of the Second International: as a consequence of its mechanistic historical determinism, Marxist socialism had broken with the great tradition of freedom in liberal thought. In view of the fact that a fascist dictatorship ruled in Italy, Roselli rediscovered in Paris the fundamental significance of the rights of man for the Left: in order to renew itself, socialism must become once again allied to the liberal tradition as a means of achieving freedom and democracy.

In the Italian resistance, in the struggle against fascism, one of the new parties, the Action Party, identified with Rosselli's ideas. For us, *Socialismo Liberale*

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* This interview was conducted in Bobbio's country house, "Casa del Sole" at the foot of the Matterhorn, on the occasion of his 80th birthday. It originally appeared in *Die Neue Gesellschaft*, no. 10 (October 1989), pp. 880-90 and, constitutively edited, in *L'Espresso*, (October 28, 1989), pp. 188-99. English translation by Warren L. Habib and Florindo Volpacchio. For an exchange concerning the political repercussions caused by *L'Espresso*'s constitutive editing, see *Mondoperaio*, no. 12 (December 1989).

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was a kind of "little red book" of the resistance; the same criticism Rosselli directed against the Italian dictatorship was adopted by the Action Party with respect to Stalin's Soviet dictatorship. We thought the socialist and communist movement had created a new dictatorship in the Soviet Union precisely because it had forgotten the liberal tradition of freedom.

How did you personally come to join the resistance?

At first on the basis of shared fate. In Turin an anti-fascist group had formed which felt a certain affinity with Rosselli's Parisian movement, *Giustizia e Libertà*, all of whose members were arrested by the fascist police in June 1935. At that time, I was also arrested, even though I was not yet politically active.

Only later, around 1938-39, was a new intellectuals' movement formed in Italy which called itself the Liberal-Socialist Movement and whose spokesman was Guido Calogero, a professor of philosophy at the University of Pisa. My transition from passive to active anti-fascism began when I joined Calogero and his group operating in central Italy, where I was a professor at the University of Camerino. The center of this illegal intellectual movement was in Perugia. Then in 1942 the Action Party was founded underground, and one of its branches that defined its ideological character was the Liberal-Socialist Movement. I myself (then a professor at the University of Padua) was one of the original members in Veneto, where militants from Padua, Venice, Vicenza and Verona gathered in a lawyer's office for the founding.

Of those five parties of the National Liberation Committee, the Action Party and the Communist Party most inspired both armed and ideological struggle. Why then did the Action Party not play more of a role after the liberation?

The Action Party was made up of young people with no political experience. Before fascism, none of us had been politically active. We thought the old Socialist Party, which had not been able to save Italy from fascism, was dead — historically finished. The *new* socialism would be embodied, so we thought, in the Action Party, which was not compromised by the defeat of the Left by fascism. The new democracy in Italy had to be created by new parties, the Communist Party and the Action Party — the parties that had taken part in the war of liberation: with the communist "Garibaldi Brigade" and our "Brigade of Justice and Liberty." After all, the two great leaders of the resistance were the communist Luigi Longo and Feruccio Parri of the Action Party.

But, of course, that was a big mistake. Immediately after the liberation of Rome, in June 1944, when the north of Italy was still occupied by German troops and the fascists, Pietro Nenni began with great success to rebuild the old Socialist Party and became the most popular politician of free Italy. Only much later, after the liberation of the north in April 1945, did it become clear to us what an enormous resurgence the socialists, whom we had declared dead, had experienced.

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Then after the war you withdrew from active politics and became again primarily a scholar . . .

. . . The reason for this was the complete disappointment of the first election, the 1946 election for the constituent assembly. The Action Party suffered an unexpected defeat, gaining only seven representatives in all of Italy. After that, the Action Party decided to dissolve; a large part went over to the socialists, others (like the party leader Ugo La Malfa) to the republicans or the communists, and many intellectuals like myself returned to their studies.

Thereafter, however, as a scholar, as a social and legal philosopher, you have been constantly drawn into politics. One example is your famous debates with Palmiro Togliatti concerning the antithesis of democracy and dictatorship. What was the nature of this dispute, which already at that time was one between liberal and totalitarian socialism?

After decades of sharp exchanges with Togliatti and the communists, I am today paradoxically much less "anti-Togliatti" than the communists themselves. Togliatti understood one thing very well: that the Communist Party in postwar Italy had to be a democratic party (in fact, he always spoke of the "new party"), which must rigorously respect the basic principles of a democratic state, i.e., the parliamentary dialectic of government and opposition. And I must say in all honesty that Togliatti, while he also remained true to the principles of Stalinist communism, of the Stalinist reason of state, not only respected the rules of democracy but made it possible for the Communist Party to become one of the pillars in the reconstruction of democracy in Italy. The real test came in August 1948, when Togliatti was shot in an assassination attempt, and the Party held the line of democratic legality against calls for insurrection by numerous ex-partisans.

Democracy in Italy has withstood its numerous crises only because of the "tacit non-aggression pact" between communists and christian democrats. Forged in the resistance and then in the deliberations concerning the Italian constitution, this pact has held firm because the christian democrats also never thought of liquidating or outlawing the communists. Of course, the communists continued to be ideologically committed to the principles of the revolutionary seizure of power and the dictatorship of the proletariat (in the indefinite future). Togliatti also never abandoned such a long-range perspective, which is why this came up in our debates in the 1950s. It was an argument concerned more with cultural than with directly political matters. It began with the conception of "organic intellectuals" espoused by communists at that time, i.e., Party intellectuals, and Zhdanov's conception of the "partisanship of culture" in the Soviet Union. My argument sought to defend the freedom of culture *vis-à-vis* the Party — *any* party. In defense of basic freedoms — freedom of thought, freedom of the press, and freedom of assembly — I naturally referred to the rights of man expressed in the French Revolution and to the tradition of liberal thought.

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My basic thesis stands: these rights of man established by the French Revolution are not just bourgeois rights, as the communists claim, i.e., they are not only rights of the bourgeoisie. The rights of man can only be valid as universal rights, and democracy in Italy can only be constituted and assured on the basis of these universal rights of man in the liberal tradition.

Then why are you so uneasy when the communists today, perhaps a little late, also refer to the liberal tradition? You have demanded this of them for decades . . .

I only insisted that they be more intellectually consistent. If there is a historical contradiction between fundamental liberal rights and the socialist perspective, then the Italian Communist Party must announce its change of conviction and work toward it instead of simply substituting one tradition for another!

Let us move on to Italian politics. More than six years ago you wrote that in Italy, a land "in which democracy does not rule, or rules only poorly," democracy is nevertheless in no serious danger — "even if I utter these words with a slightly serious tremor in my voice." Is that still your opinion? How do you presently evaluate the institutions of Italian democracy?

(Bobbio laughs) . . . Here I can answer with a formula I came up with a few years ago in an article for a French journal, when I wrote that Italian politicians had certainly not invented the permanent revolution but, rather, the permanent crisis.* And I can only make this claim with respect to Italian politics since then. Italian democracy is in permanent crisis. Italy is a weak democracy; the democratic machine has a weak motor. But I do not believe that this lasting crisis is a prelude to catastrophe. Italian democracy is weak, but stable. Perhaps the Italians are not democrats out of conviction, but they have in the meantime become accustomed to democracy. Italy is democratic out of habit.

You have also written that political apathy is in no sense always a symptom of a crisis, but can also be a sign of good health, that nothing is more dangerous for democracy than too much democracy. And you express an unmistakable skepticism with respect to all forms of "direct" or plebiscitary democracy.

With respect to so-called direct democracy, I will speak of Italian experiences. You know that the "repeal referendum" — a popular vote for the abrogation of certain laws — is in the Italian Constitution; and in recent years there has been a regular inflation of such referenda. The referendum, however, allows neither discussion nor compromise; it puts a problem to a vote, which can only be answered with yes or no, while one of the features of democracy is always the ability to compromise and to negotiate between opposing interests.

Moreover, referendum as a form of democratic participation is much less valued by citizens than the right to vote. Voter participation in elections is known to be extremely high in Italy. In the last referendum participation was about

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* Translator Note: This essay appeared in *Telos*, no. 54 (Winter 1982-3), pp. 123-133.

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65%, and one did not know until the last minute if it would even be valid (because at least 50% of registered voters must be represented). Finally, the referendum on the repeal of life imprisonment floated by the leader of the radicals, Marco Pannella, a question of a more civilized culture, registered accordingly the greatest number of negative votes.

I do not deny that there may be other possible forms of direct democracy. But when I speak of the spread of democracy I always mean representative democracy. For example, how else can one understand democracy in the factory? It cannot mean that 7000 workers simultaneously vote on all questions. There must be periodic elections, representatives must be elected, even as factory councils must also choose their delegates. How is this different from representative democracy? If there are complex and difficult problems to decide, then democracy is always representative, even if we extend it beyond the sphere of political power to economic power.

But if one so rigidly rejects the referendum, as you do, must one not then leave all decisions to a complicated and unwieldly party system, which also in Italy — as "party rule" — is becoming increasingly problematic. Will not then everything ultimately be decided by compromises among party leaders, must that not be the end result, and will not that also lead to a feeling of powerlessness among the people, with all the populist risks as in Germany?

My remarks are directed above all to the latest inflation of referenda in Italy. I repeat: Referenda must make possible intense discussion and precise answers. I am also not for the complete abolition of the possibility of referenda. But I am against the "referenda salvo," such as proposed above all by the Radical Party and, unfortunately, taken up by Bettino Craxi's Socialist Party, which go back to the "*Movimentismo*," i.e., the radical movement for plebiscitary politics of many years ago. I have completely supported a few referenda, such as the one dealing with automatic cost of living increases put forward by the Italian Communist Party. But in a democracy the institution of referendum should only be used in exceptional cases. If really necessary, referendum can be used as an adjunct to representative democracy, whose essence lies in discussion, in mediation, in the capacity for compromise. But the referendum cannot replace representative democracy.

In the 1960s you favored a unity of both great parties on the Left — the Communist Party and the Socialist Party. How do you see the relation between these two parties today?

After Khrushchev's fall in 1964, Giorgio Amendola wrote in the communist weekly, *Rinascita*, that the Party must be renewed, because all were shaken by the fact that in the Soviet Union a Party and state leader had been removed without any political discussion. Thereafter I wrote Amendola a personal letter in which I, from the perspective of my *déformation professionelle* as a jurist (Bobbio laughed), maintained that the Soviet Union lacked a liberal constitution with systematic rules. After all, there are constitutional rules even in absolute

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monarchies — one always knows who is the heir to the throne. Italian communists must at long last declare openly their position with respect to fundamental principles of democracy.

Amendola then published this private letter in *Rinascita*, and it was out of this discussion the idea came that the Left in Italy must strive for unity in one party if it wanted to improve its own position. The ambiguity lay only in that I had in mind a unification of the Communist Party in the direction of social democracy, whereas Amendola was thinking in the opposite direction. I said: "We (the liberals) need your strength. But you (the communists) cannot forgo our principles." Amendola answered with a friendly polemic: "According to you, we should give up our force for your spirit."

Today a union or even an alliance of communists and socialists in Italy is hardly conceivable. While the communists have actually moved in the direction of social democracy, the Socialist Party continues to distance itself from the socialist tradition. The Communist Party has gradually moved to adopt social democratic positions, but at the same time the Socialist Party under Craxi has unquestionalbly moved to the Right.

Here I will not engage in any unecessary polemics. Of course, the Socialist Party found itself in an objectively difficult position within the Italian party system. After all, the Italian political system is the only one in the West with a strong Communist Party, which certainly pushed the Socialist Party to the center. It thereby found itself in the role of a typical "swing party" (as political scientists call it), i.e., a party which can make a coalition with the Left as well as the Right.

Under Craxi, the Socialist Party has sought to escape this role of the "third force" and to assume the role of a "second force," such as that of social democratic parties in other countries. When he was elected Party Secretary in 1976, the Socialist Party had only 9% of the vote and had entered a period of decline. If this had gone further, the Socialist Party might well have disappeared. After the June 20, 1976 election, in which the Socialist Party suffered a resounding defeat, I was invited to make the keynote address at a conference sponsored by the Socialist Party's journal, *Mondoperaio*, on the occasion of Craxi's nomination as Secretary. I said the following (which was not published at that time): "The Socialist Party's problem is the following: In Italy there is already a social democratic party, but that is the Communist Party." No doubt Craxi not only wants to reverse this decline of the Socialist Party, but also to double its share of the vote.

Despite your critique of his lukewarm devotion to leftist principles, must you not give Craxi credit for his political success?

From the standpoint of "political virtue" — *virtù* in Machiavelli's sense — Craxi was no doubt a good politician. During the almost four years during which he led the government, he demonstrated considerable ability as a statesman, which in the end even the communists had to recognize. In 1976, when

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he became Secretary of the Socialist Party, the communists had 34% of the vote; today, they have only 27% . . .

Does Craxi have a chance to overtake Achille Occhetto in the election?

No, I do not believe so, at least not at the present time. The last election demonstrated — the European election, which is not strictly speaking a national election — that Occhetto's party can hold its own, whereas Craxi could not increase his share of the vote. We are in a difficult transitional situation, which makes all projections extremely risky. But one thing is certain: until now neither party has faced each other in such a bitter confrontation. Today we have one party on the rise, Craxi's party, opposing another party in decline, the Communist Party, and that leads unquestionably to increased polemics both in the socialist daily, *Avanti* (which, of course, is hardly read) and in the communist *Unità*.

In such a situation of the Left, can the question concerning the great tasks of the future be even raised, let alone solved? The new philosopher, Peter Sloterdijk, speaks of a kind of "catastrophe didactic" and says: "obviously great problems can only be solved when a reactor explodes in Chernobyl or a large tanker discharges all sorts of highly toxic chemicals into the sea, or other such disasters . . . . Is then the Italian party system as it is today in a position to solve the great problems of the future, such as environmental pollution, etc?

Of course, I criticize the party system, and this critique also extends to democracy as such. I am a democrat by conviction, and have always sought to represent and defend democratic principles in Italy — a country with a weak democracy. But today perhaps the moment has come for democrats to take stock of themselves. Before we consider the question: "Socialism — yes or no?" we should begin to reconsider democracy itself — how it functions, and not only in Italy. We must consider "democracy's unkept promises."

However, one can still raise other questions, and here I am speaking of a series of problems to which I must address myself and to which I must honestly say I have no answers. Therefore I am a pessimist. For example: In the final analysis, democracy is not based on the conscious consent of the citizen; rather, this consent is obtained through promises or through the distribution of rewards. In Italy what we call the "exchange vote" (*voto di scambio*) — a client vote based on a commerce of exchange: political support versus personal or group benefits has almost become a rule. This is true, not only in Italy, but also in the US, a venerable democracy with a great civic tradition. I ask myself: Is this due to the fact that today democracy exists only in the capitalist system, that up to now democracy could only be compatible with a capitalist society?

At any rate, the Hungarians and the Poles seem to think so.

Well, up to now the embrace of democracy and capitalism has at least been lively; capitalism is the only economic system that has allowed the development of democracy. I do not say that capitalism is necessary for a democratic order, but until now it has tolerated it. However, I ask myself whether this

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embrace of democracy and capitalism could at a certain point also become a deadly embrace. In a market economy, in which everything can become a commodity, no doubt the vote can also become a commodity. Up to now, capitalism has supported and tolerated democracy. But today it could lead to the degeneration of democracy. Democratic consensus would then no longer be based on ideals, principles, programs, and opinions (understood as political opinion in the form of a vote: *voto di opinione*), but rather, a "political exchange" (*scambio politico*) would be based on the political market.

You are one of the theoreticians of liberal constitutional institutions, of liberal democracy. Do you believe we are able to surmount some of the really serious and not only highly publicized problems — from the catastrophe of the global climate to the destruction of natural resources — in countries like Italy or West Germany with our old institutions of representative democracy?

These problems are probably not resolvable within the framework of national democracies. All of today's great problems, ecological as well as social, concern the international system — the "global village," as it is now called.

This is even true of the concept of the Left itself. If the Left today still has a right to exist, then I see this more in global terms as relating to problems within the developed industrial countries in which the distinction between Left and Right is rapidly disappearing. If we understand the "Left" as those standing on the side of the socially underprivileged — the poor, the oppressed, and the insulted, those shut out — then today this principle has its meaning above all in that we take a position with respect to the relation between North and South in the world economic order. We are concerned with two-thirds of humanity. But if we broaden the problem to the international order, then we are concerned with a relation of not only two-thirds of the poor and oppressed, but perhaps as much as nine-tenths of the world's population as opposed to one-tenth in the industrial nations. To use an image from the novel by Elio Vittorini, *Uomini e no*, the world today is divided into "humans and non-humans," "men and mice."

Being on the Left today means to stand on the side of "non-humans," who live and die like mice. Is democracy sufficient for these "non-humans," for these "mice"? I have spent a lot of time in Latin America. There one finds a formal democracy almost everywhere. However, in order to feel human the "non-humans" have only the following alternative: either go over to the church or the guerrillas. The mere right to vote is not enough to make them feel human. Democratic "citizenship" is perhaps enough for an Italian, a German or an American to feel human (who, then, does not even bother to vote), but what does it offer to the poorest of the Third World?

In Italy you have always been a champion of the ideals of the Enlightenment. Now you describe the future of the Enlightenment in more somber terms: the beautiful "island of reason" of which Kant once spoke is today encircled by the church on one side and the

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guerrillas on the other, or by churches which, like certain Islamic fundamentalists, are also aligned with the guerrillas. The Enlightenment, which the utopia of democracy took as its starting point, promised progress in the way of thinking, progress in the humanization of humans — Hegel spoke of "progress in the consciousness of freedom" — and simultaneously a rising standard of living for all. However, what in your opinion will become of the utopia of modernity if both promises prove to be unfulfillable?

I have no answer. I am now 80 years old, and my basic convictions have not changed in the last half century. I will continue (Bobbio laughed) to believe in the Enlightenment, to be a democrat and an empiricist in philosophy. But I have no answer when I look beyond the borders of the First World and must conclude that all this has much less significance than we assume. For example, we always speak of social democracy, but social democracy is an exclusively European phenomenon, which exists neither in the US nor in the Third World. Does democracy as we understand it exist in Asian countries? Do we not still have an all too European view of history?

When you consider the two great processes, the unity of Western Europe and the transformation of Eastern Europe, do you hope that a new European structure can arise from the spirit of the European Enlightenment?

There can be no doubt that European unity is necessary, even if I consider this process much more difficult than is generally assumed. The old nationalisms still strongly oppose the transformation of the European Parliament into a real parliament invested with real political power.

But my utopia, which is in fact an enlightenment utopia, goes beyond European unity. The problems of the "global village" can only be really solved on an international level — through a process of democratization of the international system. In *Eternal Peace* Kant not only distinguished constitutional law (*jus civitatis*), which regulates relations between a state and its citizens, from international law, which regulates the relation between states that Carl Schmitt later called the *jus publicum Europaeum*, but introduced still a third legal category, which he called "world civil law," which no longer regulates only relations between states and individuals and between individual states but also relations of individuals within individual states to each other — it is a law based on the principle that human beings are no longer citizens of particular states but rather citizens of the world.

Today questions of the distribution of wealth are also no longer so much questions of individual states but concern international justice — beginning with the immense debts of Third World countries. The historical task of social democracy today is to shift the problem of a just distribution from the center of developed industrial nations to the international level through agencies which already exist, such as the United Nations.

From the utopia of world citizenship, let us return to the contemporary philosophical discussion of the Enlightenment project. Today many former representatives of modernity

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have become theoreticians of "post-modernism" owing to the failure of their utopias. In recent years, the thinking of Martin Heidegger has played a great role not only in France but also in Italy. Many philosophers of the (former) radical Left — from Gianni Vattimo to Giacomo Marramao — stand closer to Heidegger than to Kant (in part out of sympathy with the "Greens") with respect to the question of the validity of the Enlightenment utopia.

I will not exclude the fact that I have gone out of fashion with the "post-modernists" (with whom I, in other respects, maintain friendly relations). However, that does not mean that I renounce my Enlightenment convictions. Heiddegger's "new" relevance, if it actually exists, lies in his critique of technology, and is certainly not confined to the Right. What is odd is that Heidegger, who was no doubt a Nazi, supported a party which utilized modern technology in a more devastating way than could ever be imagined.

Furthermore, the "post-modernists" claim that the idea of progress has been destroyed, perhaps forever. I can well understand their disappointment. The end of the myth of progress means the end of the illusion that world history means continuous progress towards human emancipation — a conception which was still clear and intelligible to representatives of the Enlightenment: from Kant's "escape from self-imposed tutelage" to 19th century philosophers, the positivists as well as Marx. All thought that history had a *meaning*, and this meaning was the inevitable advance of human freedom.

Of course, today no one has such a certain and dogmatic idea of progress as 19th century philosophers. Even I am bewildered. I once described myself as a pessimistic representative of the Enlightenment. Nevertheless, I continue to struggle for Enlightenment ideas.

Corrigenda

Due to last minute editorial changes, two sentences in one of the notes to Luciano Pellicani's "Reply to Guy Oakes," were deleted, while Oakes' critique of these sentences in "Four Questions Concerning *The Protestant Ethic*" was not, making it appear that Oakes is criticizing something Pellicani had not said. Moreover, the first sentence of Oakes' article was garbled, and elsewhere on the first page the grammar and syntax were altered in ways the author never intended. Finally, the crucial introductory clause, "For recent work along these lines," was deleted from the second sentence of note 29 of his article, which makes it appear that the literature he cites confirms his claim that there is no satisfactory account of the sorts of arguments needed to refute Weber's thesis, when he cites these works as contributions to the solution of the problem.

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After the Aging of the New Music

Daniel Barbiero

Much has happened in the development of music in the 30-plus years since Adorno's "The Aging of the New Music" was written.[1] In that time, the type of music Adorno recognized as New Music (music composed in the tradition of twelve-tone, serial and expressionist related techniques) has indeed aged, perhaps to the point of senility, having long been overtaken by changes in musical material, in the technologies of music production and recording, and in the very way we now listen to music. Faced with isolation and changes in circumstance, the New Music changed structurally, even going so far as to discard the unfamiliarity of the new as its defining criterion. In the meantime, other music replaced it as a vehicle for the transcendence of social givens. Under these changing circumstances we must take another look at something Adorno took for granted: the continuing vitality of a transcendent music with roots in the Western tradition of composition.

The Fall of the New Music

When Adorno wrote his critique of the New Music it was moribund, and its situation since then has only gotten worse. Already in the 1950s, the New Music had withdrawn into a defensive elitism, effectively cutting itself off from its program of social transformation. The disconnection of New Music from living situations not only isolated it and limited its ability to transform life, but also left it unresponsive to changes in music technology and listening habits, further enforcing its isolation. The result was an emptying out of form and a trivialization of purpose. As if that were not enough, time and changes in the formation of taste took their revenge: with familiarity, the insurgency of the new became just another style, and the New Music Adorno found so much to his taste was no exception. We can hear this music predominantly as a style, as a finite set of conventions, though in them Adorno found overarching qualities of suffering remembered and transfigured, qualities that now appear to us as a kind of post-romanticism specific to a particular time and place in Europe.

1. T. W. Adorno, "The Aging of the New Music," translated and edited by Robert Hullot-Kentor and Frederic Will, *Telos* 77 (Fall 1988), pp. 95-116.

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Even writing 30 years ago, Adorno recognized the New Music as having entered a stage of decline, devolving into a form of solipsism.[2] This turn inward eventually took the form of an angry elitism that offered audiences contempt rather than an attempt to lift them above their debasement. While it may be true that the exclusive acceptance of popular music both leads to and results from a "belligerent style of listening,"[3] the New Music long ago responded with what we might call a belligerent style of composing. The logical outcome was a social isolation that could produce the attitude of a Milton Babbitt, whose polemics encapsulate the frustrations of an isolated and embattled tradition. This attitude was both the cause and effect of a willful alienation that didn't seem likely to break down any barriers, substituting instead a kind of deceptive autonomy that was guaranteed by the fact that no one was listening.

It is questionable that a music prohibited to all but a few can do much to recall the experience of subjectivity for any but a few: we must ask here, what subjective state and for whom? The sheer — and deliberate — inaccessibility of this music would seem to guarantee it the autonomy it desired, as it closed itself off from the ongoing process of daily activity. Even now, our lives come to a standstill as we stop to listen to it: it has nothing to do with or say to our activities. This is music *demanding* to be relegated to a state of rarified disconnection. And with disconnection came more rarefaction and the hardening of melody into code.

Ironically, New Music techniques now sound most convincing when used for the portrayal of the social terror and human debasement they were meant to transcend. Penderecki can generate a compelling sound picture of horror with the tone blocks, unorthodox bowing techniques, and sheer volume of a piece like *Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima* or the *Auschwitz Oratorio.* Even his programmatically "neutral" works, like *De Natura Sonoris*, with their layered dissonances and monotones, violent changes in dynamics, and drastic textures, open up into an abyss of anxiety in which the brutalities of recent history hold unquestioned sway. It is doubtful that any other techniques of composition or performance would be suitable to communicate the mass inhumanities of our century — but could these same methods provide a vehicle to transcend the terror? It is as if the musical language of a humane vision had been usurped by conditions that exceed its strength: the seeming chaos in the concert hall constituted itself as the audio simulation of the undeniable chaos outside the window.

As a result of their alienation, some practitioners within the tradition of the New Music attempted to respond with changes in sound. There has been a drawing back from the strictures of Expressionism in the large sense, and from atonalism, its inheritor. The language of expression has become stylized; it has become a stereotype of "expressivity," with clashing tones and a seemingly random chaos of sound. It is not unusual now to find mixtures of tonalism

2. Adorno, *op. cit.*, p. 115.
3. Robert Hullot-Kentor, "Introduction to the Aging of the New Music," *Telos* 77 (Fall 1988), p. 83.

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with atonality in varying proportions, depending on the task at hand. Rochberg's *Sixth Quartet* of a few years back employed conventional tonality as it worked variations on Pachelbel's *Canon* in the third movement, and quoted from Mozart and Beethoven in the finale. Or there is aesthetic deception: at least since the 1950s, George Perle has applied principles of vertical organization to the raw material of the twelve-tone system, with results that can closely resemble the triadic arrangements of the traditional diatonic system. (His *String Quartet #5*, for instance, makes extensive use of recurring intervals based on thirds). It seems as if the composers, recognizing their isolation, are extending a conciliatory hand to potential listeners.

Meanwhile, tonalities of a non-Western bent have crept into the musics produced under the auspices of the Western composed tradition, creating a heterodoxy within. This is an important development, as it demonstrates the porousness of a tradition that, in its integration of heterodox compositional techniques, gives practical lie to a purity that would seal musical borders. These "foreign invasions" have had more to do with altered pitch than with the introduction of non-Western instruments, and in consequence, some of the more interesting offshoots of the New Music have involved the subdivision of chromatic scale into microtones, and the invention of alternative tunings to facilitate them. As a result, the Schoenbergian twelve-tone closed pitch system has been overthrown, and has opened out into such things as a 31-interval scale (in the middle section of Ben Johnston's *String Quartet #2*), or Glenn Branca's experiments with the overtone series that a fundamental tone generates. Some of these experiments have entailed the creation of instruments that can be tuned to produce tones that fall between the standard intervals of the chromatic scale. Yet these transformations of pitch and tuning brought more than the revitalization of a tradition: they helped the New Music overcome itself and dismantle itself from within.

We might see qualitative changes in the New Music as both embodying and responding to an increased systematization of compositional techniques that had set in after the war.[4] But the response may not have been drastic enough.

Music Technology Today

Any music that wishes to transform us and reconstitute us as listening subjects (rather than passive receptacles for sound) must account for the actual conditions of music reproduction and listening. Here especially the Western composed tradition has been overtaken, possibly because of a technological diffidence based on its self-perception as having upheld a humanist tradition. Still, in order to be effective, music must accommodate the contemporary state of music technology and listener attention, both of which have changed drastically since mid-century. Improvements in instrument amplification, sound synthesizing, and recording studio technology have altered the sound of music, some of which can, in fact,

4. Adorno, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

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exist only in recorded form. Most Ambient Music fits this description, as do some of the groundbreaking works of, for instance, Stockhausen and Cage.

These changes in technological possibilities as they apply to the production and reproduction of music have helped to give us music in a new guise: for many, the first-hand experience of music comes through recordings. The live performance has become the simulacrum, not the recording, and the sound of the digitally mastered tape seems to be the standard against which all else is judged. This trend can be partially traced back to New Music-related phenomena, such as the experiments of Cage and Hiller in *HPSCHD*. But has recording quality refined itself past the point of a reasonable marginal improvement? Will it now be necessary to insert artificial tape hiss into an otherwise too-immaculate sounding recording, as one finds now in Ambient Music? This is a perplexing contradiction brought about by technological advances in the recording studio: the technology has improved itself with the goal of producing ever more natural sounding recordings, and yet in the process the recordings have become so clean as to make a live performance sound strange and unnatural. This is true even of performances played out under the ideal circumstances of a good instrument and a location with satisfying acoustics. The plucked, bowed, or blown note, unfortified by a battery of microphones, filters, and equalizers, sounds alien next to the shimmering airlessness of the compact disc.[5] This situation clearly puts a music of expression at a disadvantage.

Just as the relation of performance to recording has been reversed from the traditional one, so have habits of listening changed. This factor alone has probably played the largest part in making the insistent demands of the New Music seem unreasonable, and therefore effectively obsolete for a large audience.

We no longer give music our full attention, and consequently, it has become music to do other things by, regardless of its genre. This attitude hardly matters for popular music, but for serious music, it can be fatal. The hallmark of current music is its diffusion and dispersal: its borders have dissolved into those of the incidental activities surrounding it. Most music has become music to do other things by, regardless of its genre or the things we do as it plays. The professional with his Walkman, reading *The Wall Street Journal* or *Foreign Affairs* on the morning bus, can just as easily be listening to a Schoenberg quartet as he can the latest Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young release. Music has become a background texture for daily life, and we tend to hear it as we hear a film soundtrack: as a supplement to the action within the frame. With these listening habits, it is difficult to imagine a derivative of the New Music that can successfully administer an expressive shock, or even make itself understood. The phenomena of shock and dislocation are no longer conducive to the opening of subjective space. Once cathartic, they now remind us of the coarse overstimulation that characterizes so much social life. Dissonance in art has been overtaken by the dissonance of

5. Cf. John Bokina's review of "Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance, and Reception," in *Telos* 77 (Fall 1988), p. 170.

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daily life, rendering the former superfluous. But perhaps it is time to look beyond expression, or more properly speaking, a form of Expressionism.

Ambient Music

The most recent variety of innovative music that successfully combined advanced musical technology with a sense of social intervention has little to do with the assertion of expressivity; instead, it grew out of Brian Eno's experiments with something he called Ambient Music (not to be confused with Muzak or New Age Music).

Ambient Music was conceived for use in public spaces such as airports, or as accompaniment for films. This music percolates in electronic washes of sound, to be heard or not heard, at the listener's preference; it is absorbed almost subliminally, virtually merging with the atmosphere. Hence the name of ambient music. Though this music does not make a fetish out of the New Music's anguished sound, the shock and psychological confrontation essential to earlier musical avant gardes have not been discarded entirely. Instead, it has been sublimated into a nuanced undertone essential to the sound. While this music is not transcendent in itself, it does allow a listening space for transcendence. In between the floating notes of softly repeated phrases, or in the intervals left by brief, oscillating motifs, time catches and seems to stop. We may even become more mindful of our physical surroundings — not necessarily as they present themselves in the socialized residue of production and manufacture, but as sensory information caught up in the music. There is, in addition, an innovative aspect to the compositional technique of this music, in that it utilizes advances in the technology of music production as they currently exist.

The New Music's demise was due as much to a change in its surroundings as to the unravelling internal logic of its compositional techniques. Bearing this in mind, we must note that Eno's experiment with Ambient Music has been overtaken by the technology and sophistication that allowed it to come into being in the first place. Today, digital sampling, synthesized sounds, and a heavy reliance on equalization have become clichés in the same way that serial techniques were before them. No music is immune to the encroachments of change or the sclerosis of its techniques. Perhaps the predicament of the New Music, so obvious to Adorno in the 50s, is a perennial one visited upon any advanced art form regardless of medium or discipline. In fact, the defining paradox of contemporary artistic production is this: its ability to transcend its moment is ultimately dependent on its ability to seize and encapsulate that very moment.

Music production is historically contingent. That is to say, we cannot avoid the changes time forces on music's available raw materials, production, and reproduction. And music is quite often at the mercy of circumstances outside itself, such as the quality and availability of technology, and the sophistication of a potential audience's listening habits. If we grant these shifts and penetrations over time, where does the possibility of musical transcendence stand?

It is difficult to believe that any music can be transcendent *in itself* — it is too

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dependent on the materials at hand, be they an available method of conceiving tone arrangement, reliable means of sound reproduction, or efficiency of instrumentation. These materials history provides. Thus any notion of transcendence must originate in the hearer, and in the listening habits one brings to the music as one listens. This means the cultivation of an informed manner of listening, but it also requires some degree of musical accessibility. For the latter, music must acknowledge and reflect the time of its production. Yet it must resist the pressure that time exerts on it. In a milieu in which popular culture has achieved both ubiquity and sophistication, serious music can hope to create little more than an unresolved tension pressing back on the pressures of fashion.

Serious music must attempt to resist the pressure of time, even if this should prove to be impossible. This difficult undertaking is only made more so not only by current habits of listening but by the general attitude of our time; we can understand very little that is not so marked by *its* time as to be invalid for our own: i.e., we tend to see and hear things as period pieces. This tendency has had a deep effect on contemporary music, which often has resorted to scavenging among the scraps of discarded music, trying to weave whole cloth from threadbare rags. Here we get little more than the clever pastiche of a John Zorn, who has created a body of work that amounts to little more than an in-joke, accessible to those who remember the theme music to "Batman," or Ennio Morricone's film soundtracks. The same can be said of the Lounge Lizards' synthetic jazz. This is music suffocated by time and social circumstances — it too readily accepts the constrictions its period imposes. The New Music itself was far from exempt from the pressures of time — on the contrary, time's tyranny was inscribed in its very name, and its relentless pursuit of the new betrayed a mortal fear of time. Few musics had a more heightened sense of time, and in staking its claim on the contradictory goals of novelty and transcendence, it foundered in isolation and obsolescence.

Time revenges itself on music through either a thoughtless preservation or a dated sound. Thus an inherently transcendent music may be nearly impossible, but striving for it is essential. When listening to a piece of music, we must ask ourselves: can it stop time at least for as long as it takes to hear the piece? And we need not confine ourselves to New Music in our pursuit of this pleasure.

Coda

The New Music had a social purpose, and that was the opening up of a subjective space within the rigid confines of an overly managed set of social relations. This it can no longer do. While other musics picked up where New Music fell, we must widen our perspective to include a look at the restructuring of the patterns of music production and distribution.

The circumstance of music recording is problematic in that recording technologies tend to be concentrated in the hands of the recording corporations.[6] But

6. *Ibid.*

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as a result of attempts of individual corporations to gain predominance in the recording equipment market, there has been much activity in research and development, miniaturization, product refinement, etc. The results have allowed greater access to recording equipment featuring relatively advanced technologies in small formats at low prices. This new situation has in turn spawned a decentralization of the production and distribution of sound recordings (aided by the proliferation of cassette technology), under the auspices of independent labels, spare-room recording studios, and networks of musicians exchanging and recording on each other's home-made tapes, the recording quality of which can be outstanding. The potential is there for composers and musicians to go outside the normal channels of distribution and perhaps limit the involvement of large corporations in determining the availability of music.

Home and independent recording is not limited to pop or rock musics, either. No longer entailing large orchestras and ensembles, serious and new musics, some of them involving little more than an electronic instrument or two and the availability of procedures for manipulating the tape, can easily be produced within these systems. If properly used, the new technologies can allow a new independence of production.

This is an important if yet unresolved situation, and one that forces a revaluation of one of Adorno's operative assumptions, i.e., the existence of a canon of work that can assert itself as the dominant line of development for future musics. Adorno's notion of musical transcendence at least implies the complementary characteristic of universality, without which music cannot break out of its particular appeal. But the social cohesion needed to maintain and accept a canon has evaporated, substituting a multiplicity of styles for a continuing line of development. The New Music is partly to blame for this: its isolation removed it from the public role it would have to maintain in order to fulfill its claim to canonical status. A canon cannot exist behind locked doors or in ivory towers. The New Music's marginalization left a vacuum that was quickly filled with the kaleidoscopic fragments of different musics, which has left a fragmentation of musical development, one that holds true for both serious and popular musics. Given the suffocating purism of the New Music, it may not be inappropriate to view this turn of events as a democratization of musical expression. Thus the reproducibility of music, and the resulting structures of distribution redound to influence the production of music: in a situation in which recording and distribution are dispersed, it is difficult to imagine any one music asserting itself as a canon.

Will this sort of decentralization help to break down the social isolation of music? Or does it represent another form of marginalization, in which one dominant musical culture is dissolved, only to be replaced by several smaller cultures, all of which remain mutually exclusive and limited to their particular constituencies? It may be too early to tell, but what is certain is this: conditions surrounding the recording and distribution of music have changed. We will know in time whether this will allow music to lead to a recovery of subjectivity or only to the solipsism of the isolated individual.

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From Uplift to Gadgetry: Barbiero, Eno and New Age Music

Robert Hullot-Kentor

It is one thing to call for manning the barricades against Habermas and Derrida. Their sensate lives only remotely shadow their public, and more real, *comic book existences. Frame to frame, they inevitably reemerge unscathed* from their trials, whether by water, fire, whatever. And people like Stanley Fish — whom Eliade would need to catalogue — actually multiply and flourish the more that is brought down on their heads. But, as to the petty criminals that appear in the pages of *Telos*, we really are flesh and blood; here darts stick for keeps and what oozes out is not easily restored. So, when I was asked to respond to Daniel Barbiero's essay I thought of Karl Kraus' wish that, instead of the universal leap into WWI, someone had had the presence of mind to suggest: "Es lieber mit einer Entspannung zu versuchen!"* It is a little late to fulfill that wish, but maybe not altogether.

In this case, starting off with a truce requires setting aside Barbiero's direct comments on Adorno, and especially those on the "Aging of the New Music." This is not dismissiveness. Barbiero is unconcerned with Adorno's musicology; his essay shows no detailed familiarity with this or any other part of Adorno's work. The first time through his essay, however, I missed the point and thought that his aim was to keep hitting the ball out of the court so he could watch me credulously exhaust myself running after each one, each time returning with another clarification: "No. Actually. Adorno didn't — as you say — take for granted the vitality of Western music . . ." "Actually. No. Adorno really never conceived of a canon of authentic compositions . . ." "Really, no, in fact, that point about solipsism and music . . ." Barbiero, however, would not necessarily be interested in these clarifications, large or small. He found in Adorno's essay a sturdy stick figure on which to hang various charges against autonomous music. Putting aside, then, his comments on Adorno clears the air; it makes it possible to get directly to what bothers him about New Music and consider what he thinks has successfully taken its place.

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* "It would be better to take a vacation!"

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Here is his argument: Music should offer uplift, transform life, transcend society, recover subjectivity. The followers of Schoenberg could do none of this because their elitism isolated them from society. Their intrusive dissonances, shock effects, radical temporality, intense expressiveness, only imitated the world from which music should give some relief. The New Music and its successors were surpassed by changes in musical technique and listening habits. Successful music today — Barbiero points to Brian Eno's *Ambient Music* — has learned to combine much of the available new technology with contemporary listening habits; it offers a "listening space for transcendence" and "a sense of social intervention." This summary of his argument, however, fails to capture the drift of the discussion, which is from a call for a music of transcendence to various comments on current musical technology, and finally to a "coda" that is exclusively concerned with technology. The evident appeal to the author of this conclusion is the idea of a musical form whose content is exclusively technic. But what holds this essay together? What is the inner logic between uplift and technic? The answer has implications for a group of developments in contemporary musical culture.

No Bridges

The first clue to the relation of uplift and technic in this essay is that no bridge spans them. Rather, their relation depends more on what is missing than on any number of transitions. Especially important in this regard is the absence of reflection on the difference between aesthetic and empirical technique. Aesthetic technique aims at fulfilling the requirements of objectification, which are defined by the problems sedimented in an inherently historical material. The only justification of twelve-tone technique, for example, is that it prepares for composition material that could no longer be coherently organized by tonal harmony. Technique mediates the likeness of the object to itself and is therefore, at the same time, the process by which subjectivity extinguishes itself in its object and actually succeeds in producing something it could not willfully posit, but which, because it is the work of subjectivity, is adequate to it and therefore potentially experiential.[1]

For Barbiero, however, just as a bulldozer adjusts the landscape to the developer, musical technique functions to adjust the music to its auditors: "In order to be effective, music must accommodate the contemporary state of music technology and listener attention." Technology mediates music and listener by establishing the priority of the listener over the material. Technique, therefore, has nothing to do with solving problems of composition that inhere in the historical dimension of the material and transcendence is not a matter of going beyond the self but a return to it. Barbiero condenses all this in a few phrases that implicitly define the role of technique: "It is difficult to believe that any

1. T. W. Adorno, "The Ugly, the Beautiful and Technology," in *Aesthetic Theory* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), pp. 68-90.

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music can be transcendent in itself — it is too dependent on the materials at hand . . . These materials history provides. Thus any notion of transcendence must originate in the ear of the hearer, and in the listening habits one brings to the music as one listens."

Transcendence, then, is the route of the neutralization of the historical content of the material. It curves back to the habits of the self — a mundane, if not unprecedented idea of the beyond. Technique leads the way and proves its ability to nullify the material by rendering it expressively indifferent. Expression is the explosion of the musical material, which Barbiero finds so disturbing in the New Music. When he enjoins that it "is time to look beyond expression" he is stating what he expects of technology. And he finds this achieved in Brian Eno's *Ambient Music*: It "successfully combined advanced musical technology with a sense of social intervention" — a synonym for transcendence in this essay — and "has little to do with the assertion of expressivity." That what is left is completely banal, and fully subordinate to the listener, is what captivates the author: "This music percolates in electronic washes of sound, to be heard or not heard, at the listener's preference."

Transcendent Listening

In this music, technique is the standard of the ear that admits only the prefabricated and indifferent. If one wonders what important music sounds like through these ears — and these are not uncommon ears — Barbiero has included a description. I have read it endlessly trying to make it disappear: "We can hear this music [New Music] predominantly as a style, as a finite set of conventions, though in them, Adorno found overarching qualities of suffering remembered and transfigured, qualities that now appear to us as a kind of post-romanticism specific to a particular time and place in Europe." The author does not wonder if the ability to sense "suffering remembered" as a dated style is a questionable capacity that amounts to faulty listening. Evidence of failed perception, however, can be derived from his mistaken idea of the history of music. Style and convention are not the homogeneous substances Barbiero imagines. Music became New Music when style, and every convention, became problematic. The same progress of nominalism that made hearing subjectivistic dissolved every given musical form: "Between Mozart and Schoenberg, what disappeared was the possibility of using large blocks of prefabricated material in music . . . . It seemed as if music now had to be written note by note."[2] The result was music that achieved a level of historical expression never previously heard.[3] That this music is radically unconventional, and a style only in its individuality, cannot protect it from being shrugged off as one more stereotype. But here it is the listening that is stereotypical, not the music.

2. Charles Rosen, *Schoenberg* (New York: Viking Press, 1975), pp. 20-21.
3. *Aesthetic Theory*, *op. cit.*, p. 320.

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Which Way Back?

As Barbiero conceives it, transcendence leads back to the habitual self. But, this self is — for Barbiero anyway — not exactly untransformed in the process. He thinks music should in fact restore subjectivity. But what is subjectivity? The principle of all the disembodied conversations on the topic, pro and con, is that the naiveté that could come close to saying what is at stake — the capacity to be touched — be rigorously excluded. There is good reason for this. The history of subjectivity is sedimented in the effort to avoid falling victim to the whims of every greeting card company. The fatality of the ruse, however, is that avoiding reification has always meant dedication to it. This is why the subjectivity Barbiero promotes appears unremarkable against the current scenery, though the phrases in which he refers to this subjectivity — if they could be properly sifted — turn out to carry strange hues: Music should "reconstitute us as listening subjects;" it should "recall the experience of subjectivity . . . but . . . what subjective state, and for whom?" And, similarly, when he thinks of praxis, what he aspires to is a simulacrum: his preferred music gives "a sense of social change." Barbiero longs for a Potemkin village of subjectivity, one in which what he calls the "ongoing process of daily activity" — a phrase meant to dub functionaries of cafeteria life with old world charm — would be safe from those composers of New Music, whom he accuses of willful alienation.

The "as if" quality of subjectivity in these phrases is actually the clue to the link between uplift and gizmo. For Barbiero, the two are — or should be — identical. Subjectivity is the arena of transcendence. The music that should bring about this transcendence is, in the language of the essay, "a vehicle of transcendence." Following the inner logic of the image, which is more compelling than the argument that transcendence is inner mediation by a vehicle. The ideal is a self whose inner process is technological and is uplifted in this experience. Out of the desire for this experience, Barbiero — and he is not alone in this — is right to be drawn to Brian Eno's music, as to all New Age Music. Barbiero warns against identifying the two, but Eno himself has contributed to a discussion of his music in the *New Age Music Guide*. And it is just along the lines of the unity of transcendence and technique that Eno is properly identified with this form of music. In the admiring words of the article on one of his recordings: "The album's soothing quality arises from two simple melodic lines, digitally processed to create waves of uplifting and inspiring sounds."[4] This is the form of admiration in the New Age: "Combining synthesizer with acoustic instrumentation, Emmanuel creates nurturing, healing, visionary New Age Music."[5] Another, Mark Isham, is similarly esteemed: "Using a minimalist technique and combining acoustic elements with state-of-art electronics, Isham dishes up aural imagery that is at times shimmering, at other times moody and melancholy."[6] A band, "Isle of Skye" has discovered

4. Patti Jean Birosik, *The New Age Music Guide* (New York: Macmillan, 1989), p. 53.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 86-87.

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the relation of "alpha waves with pleasant relaxation, tranquility and well-being; theta waves with states of reflective creativity, intuitive ideas, and imaginative inspiration. *Isle of Skye's* marriage of science and music ranges from warm and healing to beautiful, uplifting, and spiritual sounds."[7] What is heard in the music is technique, which is admired for giving a cozy sense of transcendence. How warmth can be extracted from technique needs explanation, though clearly the alchemy itself is familiar: the advertisements of computer magazines — in which tropics and jungles are rediscovered within computer chips — unconsciously bank on it.

When Cold is Hot

The translation of technique into warmth can be studied in the experience of transcendence, as Barbiero and the New Age describe it. Barbiero talks about finding in Eno a "listening space for transcendence." In other words, the experience of transcendence is spatial. This is how New Age music describes its particular appeal. Steven Halpern, one of the better known representatives of the style, claims that this spatialization of sound is the source of the music: "New Age music was born of a shared consciousness. At such events as the San Francisco Festival in Honor of Comet Kohoutek in 1973, many composers/performers, meeting for the first time, discovered that they were all hearing 'spacey' music."[8] Why is this music especially spatial? All music, as movement in time, implies movement in space. The instant in which this movement is volatilized is an act of memory. Yet, in Eno's music, as in all New Age Music, this element of memory — the instant of expression — has been excluded. Steven Halpern writes, "Even after repeated listenings, most people cannot remember the sequence of sounds in these works."[9] It is the music itself that does not know where it has been. Eno confirms this as an achievement, "One of the things music can do is change your sense of time so you don't really mind if things slip away or alter in some way, It's about getting rid of people's nervousness."[10] Tinkering — like the suburbanite who is anxious to get out to the garage to monkey with the car, or who spends the weekend at the computer, or who is captivated by dividing up the body into a dozen targets for vitamins — is the technical subjectivity of this music; its process is the dispersal of time. In the disappearance of memory, isolation is secured. And this is the ancient secret for extracting heat from cold. When the self is overwhelmed by anxiety, the cold becomes tropical just because it is freezing. What the New Age is about is summed up by what its pulseless music puts all its energy into avoiding. In Halpern's words: "We react differently

7. *Ibid.*, p. 87.
8. Steven Halpern, "Notes on New Music," in Birosik, *The New Age Music Guide, op. cit.*, p. xvi.
9. *Ibid.*, p. xvii.
10. Birosik, *The New Age Music Guide, op. cit.*, p. 53.

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to music an artist plays from a state of balance and love than to sound arising from a wish to glorify the ego, or, worse, from anxiety."[11] The *Gemütlichkeit* of the New Age as it appears in restaurant design and in lithographs on bank walls is a gleaming, polished floor with something cold to lean against. That is when the cosmos becomes a familiar place. Again, the musical equivalent: "Try lying down with your feet pointed toward the speakers. Our entire body responds to sound, and this technique opens up a whole new dimension."[12] The musical "space" that Barbiero calls transcendent, is often smilingly, sheepishly, called addictive by those who find this music appealing and want to convince the disinterested that there is something there. But addiction is in this case not metaphorical; the spaciousness of the music fulfills the desideratum of addiction: the "leave me alone."[13] One *chaleur* embraces both junkies and the New Age.

Isn't It Dead Yet?

Borges tells a zoological tale about an elephant and a monkey that has all the aesthetic wherewithal that is missing from almost every conversation about art: The elephant asks the monkey if it is really true that monkeys cannot speak. "Of course we can speak," the monkey deadpans, "we just don't do it because if people heard us they would make us work." Only because it does not work is art of any interest at all. A world that permits nothing to exist that does not exist for it would recognize this monkey as an elitist, though it would probably avoid taking a good look at its face. But in America parables defending the non-functionality of art are close to irrelevant, especially as far as New Music is concerned. It has simply been shoved off the map. It is hard to see why Barbiero would bother getting worked up about it. This music is rarely performed and infrequently played on radio; those "classical" stations, which occasionally do play this music, are currently disappearing along with funding for composition and its publication. The situation of composers and musicians could not be worse. At the same time, Eno and New Age music — in San Francisco for example — ooze out of every other sandwich. Barbiero should be breathing freely by now. Why would he bother to put another nail in a lid that has been riveted shut? Is it because, even though the music has disappeared, he blames it for what will not stop bothering him? Or did he just want to take the opportunity to talk about new technology? Or is it that, in his essay, there is no difference between the two: between the desire to escape what will not stop pounding on the door and the desire to hang around with the gizmos?

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11. Halpern, "Notes on New Music," *op. cit.*, p. xx.
12. *Ibid.*, p. xxi.
13. Adorno, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, trans. by E.B. Ashton (New York: Seabury, 1976), pp. 85-103.

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Xmas Ideology: Unwrapping the New Deal and the Cold War Under the Christmas Tree

Tim Luke

Scores of films either about Christmas or with Christmas themes have spun out of Hollywood's fascination with the holiday season. Yet, after their initial release, most of them fall into obscurity, rarely to be seen again. A handful of them, however, have acquired virtual cult status. With the spread of television and videocassette recorders, movies such as *Holiday Inn* (1942), *It's a Wonderful Life* (1947), *Miracle on 34th Street* (1947), and *White Christmas* (1954) have gathered intense followings in their perennial rebroadcast and re-release. They have become fixtures of the Christmas season as much as decorating the Christmas tree, braving the holiday shopping crush, and sipping eggnog by the fire.

Many ideological assumptions about the economy, the state, and society are woven through the "classic" Christmas movies of the 1940s and 1950s. Most importantly, these movies seem to embody the fusion of state and society achieved during the Cold War era.[1] The mobilization of traditional American cultural rituals and values during WWII to conquer the Axis continued after the war in the new struggle against the Soviet Union. These films are open to multiple interpretations. The partial, limited readings presented here of the films' economic, political and social implications simply call attention to some possible connections to the modern American welfare state during the Cold War.

Motion pictures can serve as powerful devices of cultural normalization, casting particular behaviors and meanings as "truthful" expressions that can guide individuals along particular tracks. By watching and rewatching the images of these subtle technologies of ideological discourse, individuals can script their

1. See Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Labor in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974); Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1977); Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of Consumer Culture* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976); David Noble, *America by Design: Science, Technology and the Rise of Corporate Capitalism* (New York: Knopf, 1977); and Alan Wolfe, *The Limits of Legitimacy: Political Contradictions of Contemporary Capitalism* (New York: Free Press, 1977).

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own theaters of personal subjectivity from image fragments and sound bites. Film organizes time, space and meaning along particular tracks of interpretation, while at the same time dominating the range of personal response in equally tight fields of reception. In watching, decoding and interpreting meanings from film, individuals enter complex cultural grids of meaning that frame and reframe, define and redefine, articulate and rearticulate the demands of subjectivity in the prevailing order of power. Meaning remains an essentially contested terrain of ideas and interpretations where it is individually and socially produced and consumed. Each of these films and the various political meanings they embody are also contestable fields of interpretation. Yet this analysis indicates how films enable audiences to coproduce their meanings as they decode "truthful" cultural messages from the diverse images presented in the films. The ideological territory that each of these Christmas films covers is not identical, but when taken together they cast a light on several aspects of the contemporary system of political power and cultural knowledge.

Holiday Inn *and* White Christmas

The organization of *Holiday Inn* is simple. Two New York entertainers, Jim Hardy (Bing Crosby) and Ted Hanover (Fred Astaire), are splitting up their act. Both love Lila Dixon (Virginia Dale). Jim thinks Lila is going to marry him and move to the country. Ted has been "two-timing" Jim and convinces Lila to stay with him on the road in show business. On Christmas Eve, Jim learns Ted and Lila have a thing going. Angrily, he leaves to begin farming in Midville, Connecticut, which burns him out so badly he returns within a year to show business with plans to turn the farm into a special inn that will be open only on holidays. By now, Lila had run off with a Texas millionaire, and Linda Mason (Marjorie Reynolds), an aspiring dancer, is referred by Ted's agent to Jim's Inn as a possible player at the holiday getaway. A second love triangle begins once Ted visits the Inn on the rebound from Lila, dances with Linda, and seeks to woo her away from Jim. These dynamics continue until a big Hollywood picture contract promises a chance at the big time for Linda and Ted. Jim tries to break up their act by reintroducing Lila to Ted. It backfires, Ted and Linda go off to Hollywood, and allegedly become engaged, but Linda still pines for Jim, who finally wins her back on the artificial set of his Holiday Inn in Hollywood for the movie being made about the real Inn. In turn, the Hollywood movie about Holiday Inn is completed, and the two couples return reunited — Jim with Linda and Ted with Lila — to the real Holiday Inn for New Years Eve.

Within the story of *Holiday Inn*, the course of a typical year, punctuated by major modern American holidays, is reduced to a set of signs, songs, and sketches to entertain and amuse ordinary individuals. No longer self-produced episodes of meaning-creation and meaning-affirmation, the culture of holidays are remanufactured as spaces for new routinized behaviors identified by music and dance with recreation and relaxation. Here, the film simulates in its images the disempowered consumers passively celebrating their holidays in watching

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small spectacles of song and dance in urban clubs, country inns or motion pictures. The film's structure is fairly simple. Yet it is self-referentially complex as it concludes in a film being made in Hollywood about the idea of Holiday Inn in making a Hollywood film about the idea of Holiday Inn.

The first cycle of holidays sees Jim struggling to succeed "at the simple life" as a country gentleman/farmer. Unhappy with farming, he returns to New York with the idea of turning his farm into an Inn open only on the twelve major holidays to support the farm the rest of the year. From this design, the script proceeds to wrap the major holidays themselves as entertainment packages — expressed in signature songs written by Irving Berlin — to be enjoyed in personal consumption instead of collective rituals of social, religious and political solidarity. While such light entertainments might have only limited impact on a local level if left by themselves, the initiation of Hollywood movie producers affirms corporate capital's interest in repackaging and mass marketing these holiday packages on a nationwide scale for others beset by the pressures of everyday life. Thus a film about such cultural engineering reaffirms its own power in glamourizing itself and its own powerful process of symbolic persuasion by valorizing the theme of Holiday Inn with the image of making a movie about it to deliver its messages to mass audiences. This double affirmation only enhances the audience's attraction to the film's images as it is let in on the big-time deal of making a movie within a movie about the "sensational idea" of Holiday Inn and its special vision of modern American holidays.

The film imagery of *Holiday Inn*, then, recasts the central holidays of American society into popular culture spectacles defined by a cycle of Irving Berlin songs. The special religious meaning or political content of the holidays are effaced in a cinematic imprinting that treats the holidays as an opportunity for leisure spent at a special resort in the fairly passive activities of dancing, drinking, resting, and watching professional performers acting out planned entertainments on the superficial cultural significance of the holiday. Any notion of more direct engagement in the holiday is suppressed or forgotten. Indeed, the film presents the pressures of everyday life as so demanding that individuals need to participate in the holidays in this new fashion to relax in preparation for renewed personal struggles in the workplace. Through the strategies of entertaining spectacle that reduce complex meanings to simple song and dance, which ironically this film itself becomes, the colonization of the everyday life-world advances as audiences accept these roles.

New Year's Eve becomes "One Minute to Midnight," party hats, streamers and noisemakers. Lincoln's Birthday is cast as a blackface number of "Abraham," and the emancipation of the slaves, while Washington's Birthday brings songs about how George could not tell a lie and a minuet done to swing bebop. Valentine's Day, of course, is "Be Careful, It's My Heart" and Valentine hearts. Easter is stripped of all its Christian significance save for Jim and Linda leaving church as he sings "Easter Bonnet." Thanksgiving, in turn, becomes a turkey dinner and "I've Got Plenty to be Thankful For." And, finally, Christmas is

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"White Christmas" and all of the iconic signs it speaks of — Christmas trees, a snowfall, stockings on the mantle, and sleigh bells.

Such signs and symbols are deeply embedded in individual cultural identities. Yet they have become so embedded by means of these closely scripted forms as the individualized trade goods of cultural colonization by the contemporary corporation and the welfare state. Quite often these holidays have no more collective significance than what these routinized practices individually impart in their personal interpretation. Once the popular understanding of these special holidays falls on these tracks, everyday life follows suit. Holidays with a more loaded political significance, like Armistice Day, Memorial Day or Labor Day, are conveniently ignored in the *Holiday Inn* cycle of celebration. While the Fourth of July is reduced to a sophisticated spectacle of national industrial might and Washington's military muscle, which are presented to encourage a passive role of awe and obedience, other more political holidays of citizens' sacrifice in war, healing the wounds of civil strife, and recognition of labor's importance are difficult to reduce to song-and-dance. They are simply ignored. These silences are as crucial as any full-blown celebration because they identify how not to imagine or act for oneself.

Of course, as one might expect, the most elaborate holiday celebration in *Holiday Inn* is the Fourth of July, with its cinema, song and dance celebration of the New Deal. Within the movie, the tensions of the second love triangle come to a head on this holiday as Jim attempts to sabotage Ted and Linda's crack at a Hollywood contract as well as rejoin Ted with Lila both professionally and personally. After Ted arranges for Linda to be kept off the stage by having her get lost in the country and then stuck in a creek, Linda hitchhikes with an unsuspecting Lila who lets Linda in on Jim's double-dealing. In turn, she leads Lila into the same creek. Linda then makes her way to the Inn just as Ted finishes his bang-up Fourth of July dance number with firecrackers and tap.

Before Ted's dance number, however, Jim as the Freedom Man sings a song to an accompanying short film that represents the image of freedom, the state and citizenship in the New Deal state. Freedom is recast in the film as a definite package of permitted behaviors embodied in personal civil rights and a powerful state led by great leaders with immense military power. This segment is the most intense, complex, and elaborate treatment of a holiday. It also clearly involves the most directly political and social packaging of images to guide ordinary behavior. Ironically, the Freedom Man sings of simple protections against the state, while, at the same time, exalting the state in the images of the film clip. "Freedom" as "a song" calls for freedom because "if the birds in the trees can be free, why not we"? Freedom here is cast as Jeffersonian images of natural rights, like the freedom to worship as we please, to travel, to sing, to speak, to hear, to be free from want, and free from fear. These words, in turn, are synchronized with a split screen play of image, matching pictures of ships with freedom to travel, images of churches with freedom to worship, and those of airplanes with those of being free as a bird. Then the clip frames a Maiden

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of Liberty with the Bill of Rights in hand before slipping into a stream of images of military and industrial power — America as the Arsenal of Democracy.

This short movie clip presents freedom as a by-product not of active political debate or collective participation but rather of powerful industrial might. The film shows drill presses and lathes working metal, and then cuts to airplane parts being formed into bomber wings, fuselage assemblies, and aircraft motors. In turn, these components are shown piling up at assembly bins, being fitted into emerging aircraft, and then forming fully formed planes ready to defend this freedom. From images of a spinning aircraft propeller, it then cuts to a battle-line of men-of-war at sea, a fighter wing scrambling for take-off, B-17s rising into the air, marching troops, PT boats at sea, wings of fighters fighting in formation, an aircraft carrier at sea, paratroopers making a drop, tanks on the move, more airplanes in a fly over, and a PT boat squadron maneuvering in New York Harbor under the Statue of Liberty. These rushing signs then fade into a star image projected over of paratroopers, marching sailors and soldiers, airplanes overhead and ships at sea with General MacArthur in the star insert at the center fading out to a flag unfurled and fading to FDR in the star insert over the American flag until he fades too out to the flag alone in the breeze. In end, the curtains close on the screen as the flag waves bravely in the wind.

Here is the mass citizenry's script for participation in the New Deal state as it becomes the interventionist national security state, serving as workers, soldiers, spectators in a massive political machine. In the brief course of this clip, one sees the political impoverishment of modern democracy. It begins bold in symbolic citations of Jeffersonian liberties, but it is cinematically to the flat image of industrial democracy, combining personal consumerist liberties plus full employment in the Arsenal of Democracy as it mobilizes to defend its national security against any threat to these forms of statist freedom. Mobilized democratic citizens, political hurly-burly, or partisan debate are not cast as freedom. Instead, it is guaranteed by ceasaristic generals and activist presidents who preside over an industrial powerhouse and military juggernaut instead of a vibrant republican order. This brief clip perfectly frames the state that *Holiday Inn*, *White Christmas*, *Miracle on 34th Street*, and *It's a Wonderful Life* all unfold within — a state of bureaucratic experts acting to provide basic goods and services to passive clients willing to accept a handful of personal liberties and decent jobs merely to enjoy their everyday (wonderful) lives on 34th Street, at Holiday Inn, or during White Christmases. Beyond these routinized packages, democracy makes few demands or holds few expectations.

The normalization strategy of managing everyday life in the post-1945 world in this film is quite overt. As Jim's maid tells him, women are simple: they just need to be told the right way when men want them to give up the high life, career and their independence for an ordinary life at a simple place. Indeed, men are empowered to use any double-dealing strategy to dupe women into domesticity. Professional careers are for men, while serious work is merely a brief preparatory stage for marriage and family for women. In everyday life

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and every holiday, the film's narrative repeatedly hammers home these disciplinary expectations about the personal sphere. Otherwise, the expectation of the prevailing regime is that all will connect their lives with the agendas of production and consumption at the bottom of its cultural reproduction. *Holiday Inn*, in a sense, projects the calendar as a panopticon of a new cultural setting of discrete temporal cells each dominated in terms of behavioral requirements for that holiday time. Leisure is not free and creative. On the contrary, like labor, it is also disciplined into a narrow range of specific behaviors designed to constitute a new kind of consumerist subjectivity such as it is now defined in the prevailing order of power.

As a cultural commodity produced by corporate capital, *Holiday Inn* is a fantasy of a life of leisure and creativity lived out in a tranquil bucolic setting around the artistic celebration of the major holidays that few could enjoy. On another level, it creates myths of holiday enactment for all those who cannot truly live this idyllic life of artistic self-expression and freedom. And, on a final level, its repeated broadcast constitutes a gridwork of normalization to guide its audience to behave in a similar fashion in their own lives, linking micrological personal behavior with the macrological culture package of explicitly valorized and implicitly sanctioned social practice. While celebrating the power of great leaders and the state, the role of ordinary citizens is reduced to sitting back, relaxing, and repeatedly humming a few bars from "Abraham," "White Christmas," or "I've Got Plenty to Be Thankful For."

Such images of the state and its intimate involvement in holiday celebrations are extended and amplified in *White Christmas*, the 1954 partial remake of *Holiday Inn*, set during and after the Arsenal of Democracy's rise to global hegemony.[2] Once again, Irving Berlin provides the song-based imagery of the holiday celebration, but this time it centers on the nostalgia of soldiers in the army for home and ex-soldiers' nostalgia for the army once wars end.[3] Compressed into a much shorter time period, *White Christmas* casts the army as a primal community whose reach into every corner of civil society sustains its image as a community, a family, or a society that forever has a grip on its members. The film opens on Christmas Eve 1944 on the front lines as Bob Wallace (Bing Crosby) and Phil Davis (Danny Kaye) entertain the troops in a knocked-together Christmas show. Standing in front of a painted backdrop of an idyllic New England village, Bob sings "White Christmas," and then wishes that the unit's departing commander, General Waverly (Dean Jagger) could have seen their slam-bang finale. Of course, the General is in the audience, announces it, and then bids an emotional farewell to the troops just as enemy bombing breaks up the gathering. In the confusion, Phil saves Bob from a collapsing

2. Here, like the 1945 film, *Christmas in Connecticut*, it ties back to many WWII films with their play upon the heartaches of separated families at home and their men at the front or the pathos of brief reunions of loved ones on wartime Christmas leaves.

3. See Timothy W. Luke, "History as a Ideo-Political Commodity: The 1984 D-Day Spectacle," *New Political Science*, 13 (Winter 1984), pp. 49-67.

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building. Out of gratitude Bob later tells Phil that he stands ready to return the favor anytime, a promise Phil then exploits to start a singing and dancing duo after the war. Unlike many of their comrades-in-arms, Bob and Phil live out the next years as selfish careerists — post-war Peter Pans unwilling to grow up and start their own families. Winning immense success for nearly a decade as "Wallace and Davis," Bob and Phil stop to check out a night club act by the Haynes Sisters, while they are on the road in Florida. Bob tells Phil that they are "doing it for a pal in the army," since he believes the sisters' brother Benny wrote to him for this favor. In fact, Judy (Vera-Ellen) wrote to Bob out of the hope of joining the Wallace and Davis show with Betty (Rosemary Clooney). The sisters are leaving Florida for Vermont to work at the Columbia Inn over the Christmas holidays. After helping them escape town ahead of the sheriff, who is after them over a rent dispute, Bob and Phil end up on the same train north, and agree to accompany Betty and Judy to Vermont to help with their act.

Once there, they discover the inn and ski lodge is run by General Waverly. Down on his luck and near bankruptcy because of a slow ski season, the General discovers that the ever loyal Wallace and Davis are willing to move their entire show up to Vermont to boost business. In the ensuing weeks, the two couples get closer and then Bob and Betty have a break over a misunderstood phone call. Ema Allen (Mary Wickes), the General's housekeeper, overhears talk that sounds as if Bob plans to go on national television to capitalize on the General's plight by bringing the Wallace and Davis show up to Vermont for the publicity. In fact, Bob is doing it for free simply to mobilize the whole division to visit the inn on Christmas Eve to save the General's business. Betty leaves the show, returns to New York to begin a solo career as a singer (after Phil and Judy stage a phony engagement to get her together with Bob), but she sees Bob's broadcast and learns it was an altruistic move to reunite his old military buddies in the division with the general to save his inn. She returns on Christmas Eve as well, reuniting the two couples as they mutually propose and accept marriage in an idyllic New England inn during a "white" Christmas.

On one level, *White Christmas* is about two couples falling in love over the Christmas holidays. But, on another level, it also idealizes and sums up the social experience of military service in WWII for many veterans. The all-powerful leaders of American military might, like FDR and General MacArthur, who were lionized with the Arsenal of Democracy in *Holiday Inn* in 1942, did indeed mobilize millions like Bob and Phil to serve overseas. That experience of community, shared suffering, and purpose stays with them forever as Phil's injury and Bob's thankfulness at Phil's having saved his life suggest. They meet the Haynes Sisters out of loyalty to "a pal from the Army" and, then, drop everything in their own careers to aid their old commander in his hour of need. When the Pentagon refuses General Waverly's request for reactivating his commission, Bob calls on another old army buddy, Ed Harrison, to use his TV show to mobilize as many of the old division as possible to converge on the Columbia Inn on Christmas Eve. Once they all arrive, "the slam-bang finish" for

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General Waverly that German bombing interrupted in a wartime show ten years before can be staged with all the stops out. Like Irving Berlin's and Michael Curtiz's 1943 film, *This is the Army*, the rousing final numbers of *White Christmas* celebrate the simplicity and satisfaction of successful military service in song and dance. Nearly a decade after V-E Day, and ten years into *Pax Americana*, the storyline of *White Christmas* documents the citizens of the American welfare state going to war, returning to professional success, finding the right girl, and then starting a baby boom family along with millions of others out in the growing post-war suburbs.

These images serve a two-fold purpose. First, they valorize an entire way of life made necessary by Washington's continuing desire to confront Moscow by military force. And, second, they innocently reemphasize in the most vivid way possible the "basic American values" of home, family and ordinary happiness that every red-blooded worker and serviceman is encouraged to desire. Like *Holiday Inn*, *White Christmas* details a complete outline of the regularized individual subjectivity marketed in the mass culture of the Cold War era. In the modern welfare state, these are the duties (military service, productive career) and rewards (love, family and community) every subject must accept and perhaps enjoy under the regime of what *Miracle on 34th Street* calls "those men in Washington." A year after the stalemate against communism in Korea, and in the midst of McCarthyism at home, these simple verities from WWII are given a new emphasis in *White Christmas*. Its ultimate moment of unity and celebration, because in the Army "home" served as an enduring harbor in the storm, is Christmas at home in the snow with family and friends all around. And, once the citizen-soldiers return home, the military unit is always there as a "family" willing to sacrifice all for its members. Still, in the era of containment both abroad and at home, it is the nuclear family that remains the ultimate goal, as *It's a Wonderful Life* and *Miracle on 34th Street* strongly affirm.

It's a Wonderful Life *and* Miracle on 34th Street

Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* recounts — in a flashback narrated by two angels from heaven — the life of George Bailey (Jimmy Stewart) of Bedford Falls as he struggles with the normalizing demands of personal responsibility embedded in the everyday life of small town America. Always wanting to leave town for a career elsewhere, George is continually forced to remain by family, personal, and civic responsibilities. Brought to the brink of complete psychological dissolution by the pressures of his role as the head of the town's Building and Loan Society, George prepares to attempt suicide. Yet he is "rescued" by a guardian angel, Clarence (Henry Travers), who allows him to see how Bedford Falls might have been without his continuing presence in the life of the town. In this "Dreamland" vision of what might have been, George recognizes that all he is and has been indeed is "important." Seeing that life is worth living, he returns to his wife (Donna Reed) and children in Bedford Falls on Christmas Eve, recognizing that despite his continued subjection in the

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prevailing order still "it's a wonderful life." However, true freedom denied and deepest hopes repressed are exactly the real nature of this wonderful life rather than any liberating escape from the demands of everyday existence.

In many respects, Bedford Falls is presented as a microcosm of post-WWII America. In it, a reactionary plutocratic capitalist, Henry F. Potter (Lionel Barrymore) of the Trust and Savings Bank, maneuvers to own more of Bedford Falls through his financial power. Opposing him are the Bailey brothers of the Building and Loan, Peter and Billy, who struggle to pool together the resources of the town's common people to build a better and more progressive life for everyone. George's father, Peter, and his somewhat incompetent brother Billy, represent the limited powers but good intentions of local progressive elites as they constantly struggle against the oppressive powers of predatory local capitalists. As George's father tells him at the dinner table scene, he has spent his life at the Building and Loan believing that "in a small way we are doing something important. Satisfying a fundamental urge. It's deep in the race for a man to want his own roof and walls and fireplace, and we're helping him get those things in our shabby little office." When George's father dies, George is drawn into his place, forced against his will by the Building and Loan's board (but for the good of all) to continue resisting Potter's power.

George wanted to become a world traveller, a major architect, and master builder in the big time away from Bedford Falls. However, he is trapped by circumstances into remaining in Bedford Falls his entire life. Thus, the would-be 19th century small-town Horatio Alger is normalized into the George Bailey myth of 20th century small-town America under the welfare state. Within this context, he continually struggles to fend off Potter and his exploitative aspirations. And, in the process, he uses his individual talents to keep the Building and Loan essentially solvent and doggedly committed to helping "little people" build small comfortable homes in Bailey Heights, the new Building and Loan housing subdivision. In George's life, then, one sees the contradictory dynamics of normalization at work from his earliest childhood through his adult maturation. The disciplinary codes of loyal son, responsible employee, civic leader, devoted husband, caring father, and local lender all form a particular subject in a grid of unrelenting control and limited freedom. While George's friends and brother are able to live out the dreams he believes he has been denied, he is trapped within the demands of his obligations and choices to live a life that is much less than he dreamed of but just enough to sustain hopes.

Henry F. Potter represents capitalism in two different modes, as puritanical and as hedonistic. Working within Bedford Falls with George Bailey, George's father, and the other progressive leaders of the community, Potter is limited in how far his greed can take him. Given the progressive popular opposition, he only lives as a rentier of his existing assets while picking and choosing a few targets of opportunity to expand his little capitalist empire. But, at the same time, the Building and Loan provides a democratic and accessible alternative as the little people bank together to oppose plutocratic powers like Potter. Thus Potter

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plays the puritanical capitalist scrooge, hoarding his money and decrying the small saving and spending programs of ordinary people who use the Building and Loan rather than his bank. He owns a great deal of rental housing and controls a lot of the town's jobs, but he still is not totally hegemonic. As George decries during the depositor's run on the Building and Loan, Potter wants to dominate everyone in Bedford Falls: "If Potter gets hold of this Building and Loan there'll never be another decent house built in this town. He's already got charge of the bank. He's got the bus line. He's got the department stores. And now he's after us. Why? Well, it's very simple. Because we're cutting in on his business, that's why. And because he wants to keep you living in his slums and paying the kind of rent he decides." Only collective action, led first by Peter Bailey and now by George, can stop him as George assures everyone that, "Now, we can get through this thing all right. We've got to stick together, though. We've got to have faith in each other."

Potter tries to buy George off at the point where Bailey Park was beginning to become a successful alternative to Potter's slums, but George rebukes him as being "nothing but a scurvy little spider." Potter's power lust also causes George's final crisis on the eve of his brother's return from the war when Uncle Billy misplaces $8,000 of Building and Loan money in Potter's bank and Potter finds and hides it. George begs Potter, as a Building and Loan board member, for a loan to straighten out his accounts. Potter tells him, "Why don't you go to the riff-raff you love so much and ask them to let you have $8,000. You know why? Because they'd run you out of town on a rail. . . . But I'll tell you what I'm going to do for you, George. Since the State Bank examiner is still here, as a stockholder of the Building and Loan, I'm going to swear out a warrant for your arrest. Misappropriation of funds-manipulation-malfeasance." Because of Uncle Billy's bumbling of the Building and Loan deposit and Potter's mendacious exploitation of Billy's mistake, the Building and Loan is thrown into a crisis in the government auditor's discovery of the lost money. As the Building and Loan's head, George sees himself as betraying the people's trust. He finally snaps, goes on a bender, and decides to jump off a bridge into an icy river to commit suicide and thereby raise the lost money from his life insurance. At that moment, Clarence jumps into the river first, and George follows to "rescue" him, which, in fact, begins Clarence's rescue of George by taking him into the "Pottersville" that Bedford Falls would have been without him.

With Mary's help during George's dreamland sequence with the angel Clarence, Potter is proven wrong as George's good works over the years move virtually everyone in town to chip in and help George replace the $8,000 Uncle Billy lost. Thus, again on Christmas Eve, the importance of family, community, and collective action all are reaffirmed as vital values to be embraced and followed in everyday life. Yet, as Clarence's vision of Bedford Falls without George shows, Potter also is represented as capitalism run amok without the countervailing forces of the Bailey brothers and their Building and Loan. Bedford Falls completely falls under the greed-driven domination of Potter,

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turning into "Pottersville." Potter's power, in turn, now is shown as exceeding that of the small time rentier capitalist as he transforms every human need and any personal fantasy into a commodified good or service. The quaint Norman Rockwell vision of mainstreet America is reconstituted in Potter's unchecked hedonistic capitalism into a flashy tenderloin district of sleazy dance joints, bars, pawnshops, bowling alleys, burlesques, all night grills, and bordellos. Without the progressive opposition of George Bailey and his coalition of "little people," capitalism turns every impulse and any dream into a salable commodity. The result is the complete corruption of individual identity and the public sphere. The common good slips away into a totally individualized pursuit of personal pleasures and private vices made easily available by Potter's mobilization of desire to advance his own capital formation even more effectively than his previous puritanical mode of accumulation. Ironically, as we now know, the America of Bedford Falls in 1947 becomes, in fact, a vast Pottersville by 1990. Yet, with each new step into this corrupted public life, Christmas audiences cling to the "dreamland" of Bedford Falls on their screens as the mean realities of Pottersville spreads around them.

With Potter, Capra anticipates the cultural contradictions of capitalism in the last half of the 20th century. Sensing that growth can proceed only so far under one set of cultural constraints grounded in sacrifice, frugality, and constant saving, the promise for greater growth lies in eliminating or lessening these cultural constraints by basing capitalist exchange on self-gratification, prodigality, and unchecked spending. Although the Bailey brothers clearly are in favor of mass consumption, their progressive intent is to guarantee a decent life with all the essentials for everyone. The puritanical Potter would deny basic decency to the masses to control them and the hedonistic Potter would sell them total indecency to dominate them even more closely. In either event, George's influence or lack thereof is presented as a critical intervening variable in balancing this social equation. At the same time, the film represents in a microcosm the same class conflicts in FDR's New Deal welfare state. Just as in Bedford Falls, progressive political elites were struggling with reactionary elements of corporate capital who sought to oppress rather than emancipate the little people of America from their troubles. Without the welfare state system organizing everyone against predatory capitalist greed, all of America might become a Pottersville. And, just like America, these progressive elites all over the nation occasionally need a boost from an omniscient and omnipotent outside force, like heaven or Washington, DC, to keep everything running on the right track.

Miracle on 34th Street is perhaps the most explicit example of Xmas ideology. It begins with Kris Kringle (Edmund Gwenn), an elderly but gentlemanly resident of a Long Island nursing home, walking the streets of New York *incognito* on Thanksgiving. Nearby Doris Walker (Maureen O'Hara), a junior management type at Macy's, is organizing the line-up of the annual Christmas parade, but is also having trouble with a drunken Santa Claus on the Christmas float. It is

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Kris Kringle who first discovers the drunken Santa Claus, and then volunteers to take his place on the Santa Claus float. The stage is set as crowd reaction to Kris moves Doris to hire him as Macy's department store Santa for the season. At home, her daughter, Susan (Natalie Wood), of course, does not believe in Santa, even though she saw Kris in the parade and thought he was the best ever. The rest of the film focuses on overcoming the mother's and daughter's ardent disbelief in fantasy and Santa Claus by showing them the important power of fantasy and faith in coping with everyday life. Doris' doubt over Kris Kringle actually being Santa Claus leads her to have him visit with Mr. Sawyer, Macy's personnel psychologist, who exclaims Kris is a lunatic and plots to get him committed to the city's psychiatric hospital. Believing Doris set him up, Kris accepts his commitment until Fred Gailey (John Payne), who has been wooing Doris, explains to him that it all was Sawyer's work. A lawyer by training, Fred accepts Kris' request to spring him from the hospital, but this necessitates Fred proving in court that Kris "is" Santa Claus. Of course, Mr. Macy and Kris' other friends willingly testify that they think Kris is Santa Claus. but Fred ultimately mobilizes the U.S. Post Office to deliver all of New York City's "letters to the North Pole" to Kris. Arguing that it is illegal to misdirect mail, Fred wins his case by proving that since the US Government believes Kris *is* Santa Claus then he must be. Judge Henry X. Harper, fearing the wrath of his family and the voters, concurs, and Kris is freed. Thus corporate capital, the State of New York, the legal profession, and the Federal Government all coalign to certify that Santa Claus exists and that Kris Kringle is Santa. In the process, Kris mobilizes the myth of fantasy for all who will give up on practical realism to accept its liberating rewards.

Doris and her daughter Susan are presented as the ultimate traditional capitalist personalities — realist, self-sacrificing, ascetic disbelievers in fantasy — waiting to be won over to the new system of fantasy-driven capitalism. Kris sees them as his "test case," representing "in miniature" everything that has gone wrong in Christmas. Instead of understanding Christmas as a special "frame of mind," Doris and Susan have reduced it, as practical realists, to just "another day." Since Doris wants to raise Susan "realistically" and to be "completely truthful" with her, she does not allow her to believe in "fairy tales," "giants," or "Santa Claus" to avoid "a harmful mental conflict" with the real rat race of life. Yet Kris pushes them both into believing in their fondest dreams; and, in their slowly accepting the vital importance of their fantasies, he also works to have them realized in bringing Fred, Doris and Susan together as another post-WWII baby boom era family unit in the suburban dream house on Long Island.[4]

4. Such nostalgia survives even into the 1980s. For example, the 1983 film *A Christmas Story*, echoes this suburban, nuclear family vision of consumerist Christmas with its comic narrative about a small boy's deepest desires for getting a Red Ryder BB gun for Christmas in the late 1940s.

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Miracle on 34th Street completely disconnects Christmas from its Christian meanings. From the opening scenes, Christmas is presented as an almost purely commercial spectacle and secular family ritual, driven by individuals' willingness to share in the consumer fantasy of Christmas giving, Santa Claus, and dreams come true. Taking place in New York, the global capital of the emerging post-WWII transitional economy, Christmas and its rituals are designed, staged and managed by corporate capital (Macy's) and the state (New York City and State) to sustain and/or increase consumer spending. The Thanksgiving Parade is an elaborate consumer spectacle, in part dedicated to commemorate Thanksgiving; but, to a larger degree, it is aimed at launching the Christmas shopping season. Warmed up with images of Santa and his reindeer, big business invokes consumers to spend the next two days after Thanksgiving and fews weeks up to Christmas mobbing the department stores in a media-managed frenzy of personal consumption. The fantasy of satisfying basic needs in consumption and sharing within the family is embodied in the sign of Santa Claus, who decries the crass commercialization of Christmas, but who, at the same time, mobilizes his spirit of commercialized caring to fulfill the fantasy of consumerist society in Christmas exchange.

Miracle on 34th Street presents a double-edged but positive image of corporate capital using kindness and concern to move products. At one point, Kris' young friend Albert decries that "There are a lot of bad '-isms' out there. And, commercialism's one of the worst." Thus, by directly attacking traditional high-pressure entrepreneurialism, Kris reincarnates the modern corporate profit motive as a new, soft-sell supercommercialism, masking itself as personal care and individual service. Once Kris Kringle starts the ball rolling by directly telling Macy's customers to shop at Gimbel's for products that Macy's does not have, Mr. Macy sees the advantages of putting "public service ahead of profits." In doing so, he aims to cast Macy's as "the helpful store," "the caring store," "the store with a heart." Yet this policy is implemented not as Kris argues, "to get 'the commercialism' out of Christmas," but rather "to make more profits than ever before." Thus expanding this policy throughout the whole network of stores will equally expand results in building sales. Here corporate capital is shown as losing its old "high-pressure" entrepreneurial capitalist sales tactics of "selling the customer something he doesn't want," and acquiring a caring face of facilitating the customer's construction of his or her own merchandise fantasy. Likewise, once Macy's moves to this strategy, Gimbel's, Stern's and Bloomingdale's also jump on the band wagon of "helpful, caring salesmanship." Once the head of Macy's toy department saw Kris as "a born salesman, who will easily sell more toys than ever," Macy's signs on to the Santa Claus myth to the point of Mr. Macy swearing in open court that Kris is Santa Claus.

Doris and Susan as hard-nosed realists and would-be iconoclasts, who say Santa Claus "is not real," represent all who doubt the powers of this Xmas ideology. Tthe film not only mobilizes their own personal experience to sway their beliefs, but also corporate capital andand the state to prove that Santa

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Claus does indeed exist. While it all is done with a light, tongue-in-cheek tone, it is clear that the film ends with the message that one should not *doubt* Santa Claus exists but rather that one should not doubt that he does *not* exist. On one level, his hand is at work in reconciling personal doubts, individual anxieties, and wayward individuals needing the unity of the family. On another level, his hand checks the unconstrained greed of corporate capital in cut-throat competition within its own ranks (Macy's vs. Gimbel's) by providing a caring conscience to serve the customer over getting the sale. On another level, he wins official sanction from New York State and the federal government, "licensing" him as it were to continue providing these valuable ideo-political services within the secularized workings of post-1945 America. Thus the myths of secularized Christmas rituals are legitimated beyond personal belief by becoming embedded in the accumulation interests of capital (Macy's would not deny Santa Claus' existence because it would kill sales), the legal careerism of the Supreme Court Judge (Judge Henry X. Harper would not deny Santa Claus' existence because it would destroy his reelection chances), and the state's administrative agenda (the Post Office endorses his existence to clean out its dead letter files and open space for other uses).

Here film provides a rationalization grid for steering behavior through entertainment. Left as a movie, of course, these tendencies have "maximum plausible deniability." Yet when repeated over and over, these films can have significant ideological impact on their viewers by constructing "the truth" about Christmas as well as creating "knowledge" about how big business, the state, and society work. These outlooks and roles are there to be decoded and practiced, and in the right context, easily might be. *Miracle* anticipates and thematically resolves the increasingly common crisis of broken families coping with the myths and psychic demands of Christmas ritual. Its central thematic blends the family, the firm, and the state into a seamless whole, affirming the integrity of family life, the benevolence of corporate capital, and the wise guidance of the state. Legitimacy of myth is provided by capital (Macy's) and the state (US government and New York State courts), making Santa Claus an ideologically approved icon of happy suburban consumption and family unity.

Miracle is a close study of the entire post-WWII regime of social control shifting from dour, puritanical, individual labor to fantasy-driven, suburban consumerism. The benevolence and public-spiritedness of corporate capital brought into collusion with state power to affirm mass fantasies of consumer satisfaction (often via judicial intervention and litigation) also takes flight here. It is the central fragment of the complex code of control. The regime of total administration via mass media myths, such as Santa Claus, breaks down ethnic, class and income barriers to create a single but polyvalent symbol representing the promise of giving, sharing, unselfish service, and faith in goodness.

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Xmas Ideology: Unwrapping the American Welfare State

Christmas movies seem like an unlikely place to find images of the American welfare state and its ideologies of power at work. Yet they are there. The class conflicts, political myths, and collective purposes of post-1945 America are strung directly through all these films, particularly the increasingly significant role of the state, big business, and the military during both WWII and the ensuring Cold War. In view of their salient position within many Americans' cultural enactment of their Christmas holidays, what messages and meaning do these films possibly present that keeps them in the center of the mass audience's attention? Apart from the splendid personal performances, entertaining stories or directorial virtuosity that might account for much of their enduring popularity, what broader cultural messages or deeper social significance can be found in all of these enduring film classics that tells us something about contemporary America and its celebration of Christmas?

The substance and style of popular culture are continually being reimagined and reinvented. Over time, however, certain expressions of popular culture — like the Christmas movies — become fixtures in the understanding of holiday rituals. Their messages continue to reveal much about the popular imagination of the state, society, and everyday life. While these issues are multidimensional, a more general and complex "Xmas ideology" emerges with the welfare state. In turn, these Christmas movies ironically are marked by complete silence on the actual celebration of Christ's birth. Except for *It's a Wonderful Life*, they are all purely secular, materialistic and post-Christian visions of Christmas.[5] Heaven and angels, of course, appear in Capra's classic, but they are presented as well-intentioned bureaucratic guardians, watching over Bedford Falls and its citizens. Much like federal officials, the Angel Clarence accepts his mission to "help" George Bailey after reviewing his case in order to "earn his angel's wings," or move up, as it were, in his careerist GS-grades in this New Deal statist vision of heaven.

Holiday Inn, *White Christmas*, *It's a Wonderful Life*, and *Miracle on 34th Street* cannot be dismissed as "mere" movies. They are important ideological texts. In large part, "what we know" and "how we know it" are increasingly imparted through constant exposure to and learning from such cultural artifacts. More than most other movies, these films have an almost permanent presence in recurrently showing up every year on or before Christmas. They are the cultural icons of a commercial Christmas that have helped to generate a Christmas culture driven on and by commercial icons. As hyperreal image packages, they have molded what is taken for being "the real" for four decades, as the holiday has come to embody the promise of fantasies of personal reward, group solidarity, and cultural fulfillment realized for all at least once a year. They are, at the same time, primary mediations of power, which deploy images of truth, codes of knowledge and systems of practice to affirm the larger political order in the Cold War era. They organize reality, make possibilities of individual action available or unavailable, and also frame the legitimacy and illegitimacy of institutions.

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On a material level, the Christmas shopping season is the centerpiece of the consumer-based economy of post-1945 America. Nearly two-thirds of the GNP is directly related to consumer spending, and often one-half to two-thirds of many businesses total receipts are dependent on holiday spending. The strength of consumer spending and consumers' willingness to spend more than "last year" are monitored weekly in the news media throughout the season. Not surprisingly, anything that accelerates these impulses, like continual viewing and belief in these Christmas film myths, is essential. They are among the most reliable and familiar of the season's mobilization orders to individual subjects as shoppers to express and fulfill their subjectivity as shoppers.

On a personal level, Xmas ideology presents consumption as the focus of meaning, purpose and identity. Denied many rewards during the rest of the year, lacking identity and unity in everyday life, burned out by the pressures of career in the weekly grind, Christmas is a special time and space to fulfill, if only for a while once a year, all that is lacking otherwise and elsewhere — as Fred Gailey, George Bailey, Bob Wallace, Phil Davis, and Jim Hardy realize. Moreover, it is done with the full support of the state and capital, who recognize that the psychosocial charge of the Xmas ideology simultaneously might legitimate other power-driven state agendas and capital-accumulative corporate plans.

Xmas ideology, then, serves as a basic code for articulating some personal subjectivity and realizing some limited collective meaning in a social context that continually destroys both. To reject its outlook, as "the realist" Doris Walker, "the suspicious" Judy Haynes, or "the confused" George Bailey learn, is to deny any center of existence. The modern dynamics of capitalism are driven by continual alienation, robbing individuals of their life force, personal meaning and collective identity in the upheaval of the marketplace. To sustain these psychosocial tendencies, it is useful to generate ideologies of self-gratification and fulfillment as in the cult of Christmas, which rather than being cast as a Christian celebration of Christ's birth, is instead turned into a fantasy of self-fulfillment and collective solidarity as part of a celebration of materialistic giving (and receiving). Consequently, like the modern secular welfare state, everyone of any faith or non-faith can participate in its workings. This cultural twist has turned so far that in many communities today there is immense public resistance to city, county or state sponsored Christmas creche displays in public spaces. Even though average consumers recoil against state-supported nativity

5. Of course, Capra does play with the Christ idea in his darker 1941 film, *Meet John Doe*, in which Gary Cooper as John Doe is almost martyred by big business and state after sparking a mass movement to help "the little people" of America during the Great Depression. He survives, however, and goes forth reborne on Christmas Eve to continue fighting for social reform. Of course, the ambiguous role of pagan rituals and Christian rites in the Christmas celebrations of Western Europe and the US has been a matter of scholarly dispute for decades. Still, in the cultural frameworks of most white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant Americans the common assumption behind all the pagan borrowings is that Christmas is ultimately connected to the celebration of Christianity's beginnings.

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scenes, they happily accept gigantic Santas, Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer or Christmas trees surrounded by brightly wrapped gifts. Forsaking Christian imagery, they embrace the seasonal logos of corporate-managed mass consumption as their preferred symbols of the season. These contradictions serve tremendous social purposes, bolstering the ideological instruments of corporate hegemony, and driving the legitimation of consumer-based capitalism.

On the political level, Xmas ideology is one framework of normalization enabling a decentered mode of power to insinuate its influences into the individuals' everyday life. It both expresses and effects these influences on the lives of those who attend their play and coproduce these meanings in these ways. The individual characters it depicts are normalizing spaces/places of identification, comparison, justification for those who check out the film and television screens during the movies' perpetual reruns from year to year. The myths of home, hearth and family that was so potent in the song "White Christmas" during WWII, surfaced first in *Holiday Inn*, and then became the focus of an entire presentation in *White Christmas* and *It's a Wonderful Life*. The virtual absence of Blacks in these films, except as servants or entertainers in *Holiday Inn* and *Miracle on 34th Street*, is also a significant subtext continuously recasting the rituals of Christmas as a "white" Christmas. Xmas ideology provides an imaginary fusion of the personal and social, private and public, corporate and state, individual and collective that defines and legitimates what white America has wanted to be about since the New Deal: the fantasy of self-fulfillment in close families, small town community, wartime memories, and personal consumption.

The Christian rituals of Christmas, then, have been remanufactured by capital and the state during WWII and the Cold War into "Xmas." Without it, the rituals of life in consumer society might disintegrate even more than they have already, making Xmas an essential aspect of exchange. It mediates the forms of personal subjectivity in the intimate sphere of caring with the corporate agendas of spending and having. Christmas as "Xmas" becomes in film the essential simulation of settled social traditions, family unity, and collective purpose for many modern American Pottersvilles that otherwise lack these qualities.[6] The social disintegration and cultural fragmentation so endemic to everyday existence in today's society are suspended or bracketed in the normalizing utopian "dreamlands" of white Christmases, the pleasant escape to a Holiday Inn, Bedford Falls as America, and the bustling shoppers on 34th Street that now frame the screen-driven construction of this holiday.

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6. More recent Christmas movies ironically do present Xmas in contemporary America as Christmas in Pottersville. For example, Bill Murray in *Scrooged* (1988) acts out Xmas as a bizarre mass-media scam to sell trash to the viewing public. Bruce Willis in *Die Hard* (1988) spends his holiday shooting it out with terrorists who have disrupted his wife's office Christmas party.

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Sometimes a Cigar is Just a Good Smoke: Xmas Ideology or Reaganism?

Paul Piccone

Film criticism is tricky business. Like literary criticism, of which it is really a subdiscipline, it often turns out to be a pretext for the critic to articulate idiosyncratic positions or project onto texts altogether foreign meanings. Deconstructionists go as far as to claim that these interpretations are all there is. The text is ultimately only an excuse. However one sees it, criticism has gradually come into its own as a Trojan Horse for the kind of speculative reflection that philosophers have cautiously avoided because of their obsession with conceptual precision and logical rigor. The result has been the development of a new, highly dubious and covert philosophical enterprise, and a rape of texts beyond the authors' worst possible fears. Today, apparently, everything can be read into texts whose objective meaning readily evaporates under the heat of interpretation. Tim Luke seems to have been swept away by this trend, to the point that he feels free to provide interpretations which turn out to be not only untenable but also inconsistent with his own theoretical precepts. Since his analysis raises crucial issues dealing with things such as the changing character of the culture industry and the marketing of the New Deal and the Cold War, it is important to provide interpretations somewhat more carefully historicized than he does. His interpretation seems to recycle Old Left myths about American culture in the 1940s and 1950s.

While Luke's account of "Xmas ideology" contains a number of penetrating insights, he does not pay sufficient attention to his own theoretical perspective. His account not only fails to show the extent to which these movies do or do not reflect a Cold War ideology, he also misreads the minimal or non-existent New Deal apology they contain, and ends up providing a disappointingly flat explanation for the continued popularity of a set of relatively mediocre films of a generation ago. More importantly, Luke altogether avoids the crucial question concerning the extent to which the popularity of these artifacts transcends their particular historical context. In that context they may have performed a specific ideological function, yet they remain popular within a new context where the original ideological appeal should no longer be

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meaningful. That appeal takes on an altogether different meaning precisely because of the changed historical context. If the movies were only convenient wraps for Cold War and New Deal ideology, it would be difficult to explain their continuing popularity.

According to Luke's earlier efforts to analyze American society in terms of the artificial negativity thesis,[1] the age of artificial negativity that followed what the first generation of Critical Theorists called the phase of one-dimensionality brought about major ideological reversals. For example, that identity logic which earlier translated into a strategy of social homogenizaton managed by a powerful central bureaucratic apparatus (the state) is no longer uncritically deployed to eliminate all particularity and otherness in order to pave the way for mass production and distribution. Rather, to the extent that such an objective was successfully accomplished by the 1950s, the homogenization strategy became obsolete and replaceable by a new one better suited to tackle the new system blockages resulting from the growing irrationality of the administrative apparatus. Furthermore, technological developments now allowed for a wide particularization of both consumer products and a highly stratified labor market. Here, the earlier strategy of Americanization gave way to a reconstitution and rediscovery of ethnic, religious and linguistic particularity at a time when they had practically disappeared;[2] the New Deal's efforts to collapse state and society were replaced by the glorification of the autonomy of a society long since penetrated through and through by an intrusive, inefficient state; and the monistic logocentrism of modernity came under the attack of the relativism and pluralism of post-modernity.

This is not the place to recycle arguments Luke himself has already eloquently articulated. The point is that the historicism of the artificial negativity thesis requires a contextualization of popular culture in the phase of one-dimensionality to such an extent that in the age of artificial negativity it becomes either wholly irrelevant and counterproductive, or else its ideological character allows for a reinterpretion addressing the new situation, or, lastly, it addresses problems which have managed not to reverse their meaning over time. In the case of the movies Luke discusses, their continuing appeal has nothing to do with their successful articulation of some transhistorical "Xmas ideology" but, rather, with the fact that their meaning is only

1. Tim Luke, "Culture and Politics in the Age of Artificial Negativity," in *Telos* 35 (Spring 1978), pp. 55-72; and "Still the Age of Artificial Negativity" (forthcoming).

2. To the extent that immigration has become a permanent source of labor power in an American society which, like all other advanced industrial societies, is reproducing itself less and less (thus also being able to prop up system-legitimation mechanisms such as upward social mobility in an economic context of little or no growth), the question of minorities and multiculturalism will remain open indefinitely. The point, however, is that the New Deal strategy of homogenization did obliterate earlier residual forms of particularity. The new multiculturalism is of a different nature, split between recent immigrants, traditional minorities and a variety of marginal groups.

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accidentally associated with Christmas and deals with issues that address the contemporary predicament even more effectively than today's cultural pro ductions. Before discussing these possibilities it is useful to dispel the Old Left mythology that Hollywood productions in the 1940s and 1950s were nothing more than crude agitprop for the New Deal and the Cold War.

Projecting Cold War Ideology

The movies Luke discusses simply cannot be seen as overtly or covertly articulating a Cold War ideology. The only internal evidence he provides for his claim is a marginal emphasis on military and industrial might, and army camraderie. The problem of communism as the totalizing other or the Manicheanism typical of Cold War ideology does not come through in any of the movies. In *It's a Wonderful Life* the totalizing "other" is Potter, the quintessential paradigm of entrepreneurial capitalism, whose efforts to control Bedford Falls precipitate the crisis that prevents the hero, George, from leaving, and around which the whole movie revolves; in *White Christmas* it is economic need that ultimately totalizes a plot concerned more with songs and dances than anything else; in *Holiday Inn* the red thread is provided by a traditional search for meaning in farming, performing and emotional fulfillment (another excuse to string along a lot of song and dance); and, lastly, in *Miracle on 34th Street* "the enemy" is none other than a generalized instrumental rationality that threatens to flatten all meaning into a gray, lifeless realism.

Communism as a justification for military preparedness and bureaucratic centralization is nowhere to be found. At best, secondary military themes come in only as nostalgic props which, in some instances (*White Christmas*) provide the experiential substratum upon which an artificial community is eventually reconstituted. Nowhere is any value judgment concerning either the Cold War or WWII smuggled in, other than in the weak sense of taking for granted the existence of the military and of WWII (in *It's a Wonderful Life*). In *Holiday Inn* and in *Miracle on 34th Street* there is hardly any reference to war, communism or the military. Even negatively, in terms of a celebration of "bourgeois" values of individualism, meritocracy and privatism, no case can be made that these movies are in any way their ideological apologies. If anything, it is the concept of solidarity and, particularly in *It's a Wonderful Life*, communitarian values which are idealized.

The New Deal vs. Entrepreneurial Capitalism

In at least two of these movies the main thrust has nothing to do with the demonization of communism in order to legitimate American values, but with the more important domestic struggle between old fashioned entrepreneurial capitalism and a more humane version which today, after the New Deal has run its course, can in no way be identified with what in fact ended up being institutionalized. In *It's a Wonderful Life* entrepreneurial capitalism, embodied by Potter, is depicted as narrow-minded, cruel and destructive,

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and in *Miracle on 34th Street* these characteristics are compounded to the point that they become counterproductive for the capitalist's main goal of maximizing profits. Interestingly enough, however, in neither case does bureaucratic regulation or fine-tuning by a centralized federal apparatus (the essence of the New Deal) play much of a role. In *It's a Wonderful Life* the alternative is a kind of pre-modern capitalism rooted in the community which, as a result of regarding profitability only as *one* objective among others, is not very profitable, while in *Miracle on 34th Street* the message projected is one advocating the transcendence of instrumental rationality of shortsighted middle-level managers: only by contextualizing profitability within a broader framework of servicing the public does capitalism end up more successful than before. Even the capitalism of *Holiday Inn* or *White Christmas* is peculiarly premodern, not only in the way it intertwines business and personal life but in that, when the two clash, it is the latter which takes precedence over the former.

It could be argued, with Luke, that in these movies Washington is hovering in the background, as heaven above (*It's a Wonderful Life*), the legal system (*Miracle on 34th Street*), or the source of military solidarity (*White Christmas*). These, however, are mere details rather than defining features. The point that Luke misses is that, in all these movies, whatever positive reference there is to the bureaucratic apparatus, it is always counterbalanced by the depiction of still thriving communities threatened by an irresponsible and inhuman entrepreneurial capitalism (*It's a Wonderful Life*, *White Christmas*, and *Holiday Inn)* conceivably in need of external controls from an independent, presumably neutral, external agency: Washington. Unless one believes in the myth of a transparent form of social organization free of all conflicts (a kind of heavenly communism) there is nothing particularly ideological in such a depiction — at least not in Luke's sense of legitimating the New Deal as a new mode of capitalist domination. The real objective is not so much the safegarding of profitability (always, however, a necessary condition), but the defense of simple traditional values and strengthening eroding community bonds which, as the Lynds had already shown in their classical study of *Middletown*, had been terminally compromised more than a couple of decades earlier. The two readily available alternative models, a crude *laissaz faire* capitalism and an egalitarian redistributive socialism, could not possibly qualify as qualitatively different solutions, since they are both predicated on abstract individualism and instrumental rationality equally inimical to community and traditional values. Consequently Washington, at best, comes in only as a necessary evil.

The real problem of the New Deal was not so much the positing of a powerful external mediator to regulate the autonomous functioning of discrete social units, but that it accelerated the disintegration of precisely those units it was meant to regulate. What was fraudulent about it was that the disintegrator was successfully marketed as the integrator. Thus a truly New Deal ideology would have to present scientistic rationality and the bureaucratic apparatus in the typical social-scientific Weberian depiction as an irresistible rationalizing

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juggernaut able to reconcile universal and particular without compromising the specificity of the latter under the pretense of defending its autonomy. In Luke's account, however, the bureaucratic apparatus is surprisingly presented as something like the Old Left's central committee of the capitalist class concerned only with guaranteeing profits and financial growth. This is residual Marxist nonsense. The bureaucracy is interested in guaranteeing the perpetuation of capitalist relations, and therefore of profitability, only because this is, in a capitalist society, the easiest and best way to ensure stability. To do otherwise is to undermine the conditions for the system's own reproducibility and therefore to paralyze it. In other words, the bureaucracy can be redirected, as in fact it was with the New Deal and, later on, with the Great Society, to protect other interests. Unless one is prepared to alter qualitatively the very nature of the system, however, this steering cannot threaten capitalist interests as a whole without risking major disruption in the form of economic crises. At any rate, Luke's analysis should have limited itself to the presentation in these movies of Washington as a benign and neutral external mediator concerned merely with the smooth functioning of a still locally centered system, and contrapose that with the intended or unintended resulting disintegration, i.e., to the ways these movies embodied and helped popularize a vision of how to reconstitute American society which, at the time of its formulation, was not particularly problematic in terms of what it asserted (unlike what it glossed over, such as the invisibility of Blacks and immigrants, the increasingly contradictory social role of women, the extent of poverty and deprivation, etc.).

Social Identity for the Holidays

What in Luke's analysis is even more questionable than the forced superimposition of Cold War and New Deal narratives on these movies is the peculiarly parochial and naive notion of the function and meaning of holidays. Thus he castigates as downright evil the attempt to repackage Christmas in terms of personal consumption and as an identity-constituting phenomenon since — and this is crucial — presumably Christmas should have something to do with Christ's birth. This is simply an academic version of Charlie Brown's ideology-critique of Christmas, whose spirit is seen as corrupted by consumerism but still recuperable by means of nurturing and care. It is also the culture industry's ideological self-indictment of its consumerist manipulation of Christmas, recycled every Christmas by countless TV pundits — usually sandwiched between clever commercials stimulating more of precisely the same consumption. As usual "it is the thought that counts, but your present to me still better cost as much or more than the one I gave you."

Even for Christians (and one should not forget that they are only *part* of the US population) Christmas was originally an invention of the culture industry of the medieval theocracy. It was meant to constitute Christian identity as universal by repackaging in Christian garb essentially pagan rites still enjoying considerable popularity. The date itself was totally arbitrary, the parable of the birth

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highly dubious, and it was packaged precisely for personal Christian consumption rather than any collective meaning-creation and affirmation. At any rate, traditional guardians of culture, be they Jews, Catholics, Protestants or even Muslims, have *always* bitched and moaned about the new generations failing to "get the message straight" and, instead, falling in line with the predominant pop culture. From Spartacus to Augustine's *City of God* to Erasmus and Thoreau, that has always been the case. Even at their peak, cultures are always threatened by their equivalent of MTV which, at the same time, functions also as negative legitimating alternatives. The critique of the corruption of the holiday spirit is an inextricable part of that very spirit, without which the latter could not establish a clean break with the everyday it is meant to periodically reactivate.

More generally, holidays have precisely such a function: to reconstitute collective social identities around the satisfaction of personal human needs. Why is it shocking that, when the New Deal does this — something every social order is not only entitled but also *obliged* to do in order to legitimate itself as a viable social order — it comes up with something which reflects its social structure? So, within the New Deal the commodity form, mediated by the bureaucratic apparatus, provides the totalizing mechanisms allowing for collective and personal identities. Is this really so bad? What are the alternatives, especially in a multicultural society such as the US? Religious identities? Linguistic identities? Ethnic identities? Class identities? Most large American urban areas are already much too similar to Azerbaijan, without having to encourage further such a trend by trotting out forgotten identities in a context where the task is to forge new ones on the basis of living multicultural experiences. Marx's fulmination about pathological identities constituted by what one *has* rather than what one *is* tends to overlook the fact that identity is constituted by the particular socio-historical context within which one operates. Thus, within a capitalist context characterized by an abstract individuality showing no inclination whatsoever to give way to a more theoretically desirable social identity, it makes little sense to talk about who we are independently of what we do and what we own. Pending the arrival of the Absolute Spirit with the institutionalization of the Classless Society, we are constituted by social and cultural identities dictated by the *really existing advanced capitalist context*. Only intellectuals, stuck in their obligatory universalism, find this theoretically intolerable. Almost everyone else simply plods along in a luxurious decadence and disintegration partially checkmated, at best, by fading premodern residues. When and if narcotics replace MacDonalds to the point that the system cannot reproduce itself successfully, then the question of alternative identities may come to the fore.

In any event, quilting conflicting cultures into a working community is constantly threatened by internal explosions or potential disintegration, while the success rate of attempts to enforce social identities from above as in, e.g., the USSR, is even less encouraging. What should have resulted (and was until recently advertised as already having resulted) in the successful homogenization of all hitherto premodern subjects into a rational secular society committed to

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collective solidarity and the fulfillment of human needs independently of particularistic premodern and irrational residues has been shown by recent ethnic, religious and national explosions to have been an unmitigated failure. The point is that, notwithstanding all the shortcomings the culture industry itself constantly attacks, consumerism offers one *successful* model of cultural homogenization which, in less-than-idyllic ethnically, religiously or linguistically polarized places such as the West Bank, Armenia, Northern Ireland, Montreal, or the Basque regions, is considerably preferable to upholding a necessarily decrepit cultural heritage (and all cultural heritages can only be decrepit) based on prejudices, dysfunctional myths and a phony cultural particularism permanently threatening to explode in genocide, racism, and other "exclusionary practices" (to use the fashionable lingo of hip postmodern academics).

Immediately after WWII Sartre correctly pointed out, in his *Anti-Semite and Jew*, that it is the other's gaze that constitutes the Jew as a Jew. In other words, it was the discriminatory practice that made particularity an inescapable curse. But that was before the homogenization strategy of the culture industry. Today, at least in the US, where the pervasiveness of the commodity form has flattened practically everyone to the level of more or less sophisticated consumers, cultural particularism has become the ideology of upwardly mobile subgroups able to successfully translate traces of particularity into tangible career advantages. Here an unfortunate and unintended consequence is the reintroduction of precisely those earlier differences previously homogenized away by the culture industry in a situation where, having lost all living cultural traits, the artificial particularity reintroduces all the liabilities and none of the assets previously associated with belonging to ethnically, culturally or religiously distinct communities.

Problematic as it is, forging new social identities out of the living experience of an otherwise culturally heterogeneous society can in no way be substituted by attempts to reconstitute particularities whose distinctive experiential rationale no longer exists. For all its faults, consumerism in the 1940s and 1950s (with the possible exception of Blacks, whose eventual full-fledged integration lagged by a decade or more) did manage to provide a substratum for a new, truly multicultural identity more representative than the pre-WWII image of the American as a vigorous, healthy, upper-middle class WASP (at that time already a minority among others). In the movies Luke discusses, especially *It's a Wonderful Life* and *Miracle on 34th Street*, the community bonds threatened are not traditionally ethnic, religious or linguistic but the new and consequently still relatively weak kind which, paradoxically enough, the culture industry was in the very process of helping to create.

To defend, with Luke, the authenticity of the mythological meaning of Christmas in the American context against the constitutive role taken by consumption on the ground that consumerism is a capitalist invention is to forget that capitalism is not and cannot be solely about profits: in some way or other it must meet important human needs alongside which the profit motive can be conveniently appended. When the four movies Luke analyzes do depict communities, as in

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White Christmas and *It's a Wonderful Life*, they always seem artificial, not because they create bonds less intense than those engendered by traditional communities, but precisely because of their newness and transparency. The holidays whereby these new communities generalize themselves by constituting identities through the very practice of observance can no longer be easily mystified by reading them back into a thereby mythologized past. Thus they retain a secular transparency which weakens their legitimacy and exposes whatever hidden agendas they seek to fulfill. However, the mere exposure of these hidden agendas, which Luke does all too well in his "Xmas Ideology," does not exhaust their meaning.

Xmas Ideology: Unwrapping Reaganism under the Christmas Tree?

As William Leiss showed a few years ago in *The Limits of Satisfaction*, human needs are basically simple. It is the inescapable conceptual mediation between them and the objects of their satisfaction that complicates matters by introjecting extraneous entities and multiplying possibilities. This mediation is what makes possible advertisement and ideology by intervening in the process of constituting the object of satisfaction according to criteria able to link subliminally these simple needs with *particular* objects privileged by the advertiser or the politician. Thus the continuing popularity of the movies Luke discusses cannot have anything to do with the covert marketing of New Deal and Cold War ideology, since the latter no longer exist, or never did, as possible means of satisfaction for most of the viewers who continue to enjoy these old movies. Rather, it has to do with the way the latter celebrate certain simple values which remain as desirable today as at the time the movies were originally made: love, family, camaraderie, community, solidarity, dreams, hope, etc. The obsolete framework which allows the articulation of these values, even if no longer recognizable by the viewer, is basically irrelevant: a mere means. The latent ideological character of these films is thus not in their smuggling in the New Deal or the Cold War, but in positing solutions predicated on a *status quo ante* inexorably being transformed by the very forces these movies attack.

Consider *It's a Wonderful Life*. In a sense, like most artists, Capra can be seen as working with readily available cultural ruins to constitute a statement about the present. Thus he recycles for American consumption the *Faustmotif*, not like Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus*, by focusing on the self-destructive tragedy of the original fragment, but negatively, by reversing most of its negative features. Unlike Faust, who does embark on a journey of abstract individualism unencumbered by traditional limitations and at prohibitive costs, George Bailey also wants to leave his hometown to set the world on fire, but never quite manages to do it. The resulting frustrations are not assuaged until the end when, like the old Faust of the second part, he also discovers that meaning and fulfillment can only be found in one's community among friends and kin. In fact, without people like him, quaint communities such as Bedford Falls turn into Pottersville. As Luke points out, it is Clarence, the angel (or the

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agent of the New Deal who functions as a positive version of Mephisto) who knows best and can point George away from suicide and back on the right track with family and friends. Yet heaven (Washington) remains throughout external to the unfolding saga, intervening only in a moment of crisis and ready to recede as soon as the crisis has passed. Furthermore, Bedford Falls remains threatened by Potter's greed, but at the end it remains what it was originally: a small thriving town molding a community out of a multicultural citizenry living together in harmony.

Notwithstanding some vague similarities which may have allowed it to be interpreted as such, this is not necessarily New Deal ideology. According to the latter, Washington is not an exceptional device deployed in time of crisis and readily forgotten once the crisis is over. Rather, it is a permanent institution needed to stabilize an otherwise inherently crisis-prone capitalism which, unregulated, had already resulted in the Great Depression. Similarly, after several decades it is clear that Bedford Falls has in fact become Pottersville, and not only because of Potter's greed as in the film, but also as a result of Washington's intrusion and complicity in intensifying the kind of disintegration that George Bailey's communitarian capitalism was meant to prevent. In the 1980s this was none other than Reagan's message, predicated precisely on a promise to return to the Bedford Falls of his youth. Could it be that what was being unwrapped under the Christmas tree in the 1980s was not exactly Luke's New Deal and Cold War ideology but instead Reaganism? And would this not explain the film's continuing popularity better than the appeal of distant events such as the New Deal and the Cold War, which not only most of the younger viewers have never experienced first-hand but which today lingers on in the form of high taxes, poor services and incompetent administration?

The same could be said of *Miracle on 34th Street*. The short-sighted instrumental rationality of the Sawyers of this world, which causes all the problems and results in Kris Kringle's trial, is much more easily identifiable in the 1980s and 1990s with wooden bureaucratic rationality of New Dealers and their heirs as depicted by "The Great Communicator" than, as Luke suggests, the largely ornamental legal system or the still relatively efficient Post Office. In *Holiday Inn* and *White Christmas*, what may have appealed to the MTV crowd of the 1980s, led by a President who was an ex-actor, may not be so much the veteran's WWII nostalgia constituting a lasting community as much as the primacy of the media in constituting reality and legitimating success. The lingering military loyalty may or may not be a code for the Cold War, but it certainly cannot account for the popularity of the films in question with the post-Vietnam generation living at a time when the image of the military was no longer even close to what it was immediately after WWII.

Rewrapping the New Deal and the Cold War

A final problem with Luke's account is an uncritical characterization of the past seen not in terms of what has transpired since but, surprisingly, in the

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way the Old Left saw it while that past was still alive. Thus both the Cold War and the New Deal appear as abstractions out of the late 1960's: the first is seen as a creation by American imperialism, and the second as a shrewd capitalist strategy to prolong domination in the face of radical challenges from the Left. But what were the objective alternatives available at that time? Is it possible to still claim that the choices taken were as one-sided as critics claimed when they were being made?

Consider the alternative solutions proposed at the time: in light of what is known today, they appear considerably worse than the one historically chosen. At that time, during the 1940s and 1950s, the main oppositional agencies in the US were the communists and the anarchists, whose programs were hardly defensible then and are even less so now. The perennial "third way," democratic socialism, either readily deteriorated into Social Democracy and, as such, into another Brand X European version of the New Deal, or it threatened to forget about its democratic modifier and go the way of other garden variety "People's Democracies." As for more hard-nosed Left positions, in a document striking for its honesty and ruthlessness, *Humanism and Terror*, Merleau-Ponty unabashedly defended Stalinist terror and the necessity of the Gulag — at that time still called "the camps" — and Sartre shortly thereafter regretfully pronounced existentialism to be, at best, transitional, and communism "inevitable." The only other available oppositional views at the time were the crude premodern hallucinations of those few anarchists who had managed to survive the "good old days" of the 1930s. Within such a context characterized by a communism we know now to have been unqualifiedly imperialistic (Stalin's tactical policy of "socialism in one country" to the contrary notwithstanding) the Cold War no longer appears as such a catastrophic strategy. It did contain Stalinism and its successor, Brezhnevism, while avoiding major nuclear confrontations. The same goes for the New Deal.

The saga of Bedford Falls, of course, is pure fiction, but it does capture what small town America thought of itself and the values it sought to uphold. Notwithstanding their quaint character, it cannot be argued that these values are terminally tainted by modernity or that there are readily available alternatives, or even that they simply function as figleafs for capitalist rationalization, since the whole indictment of the latter is that it destroys those values (Right critique) without simultaneously allowing for the substitution of new, more meaningful and functional ones (Left critique), or that the whole effort is ultimately meaningless (post-modern critique). But, if so, how can Luke complain about the way these movies glorify and market the welfare/warfare American state of the New Deal and the Cold War? What can one have expected Hollywood to produce under such circumstances? If, as it turns out, at that time Capra had more foresight than, e.g., guiding lights of Western wisdom such as Sartre or Merleau-Ponty, is it legitimate to demand any more than the likes of *It's a Wonderful Life*? Had Luke taken care to rewrap his ideas about the Cold War and the New Deal before undertaking his analysis, he

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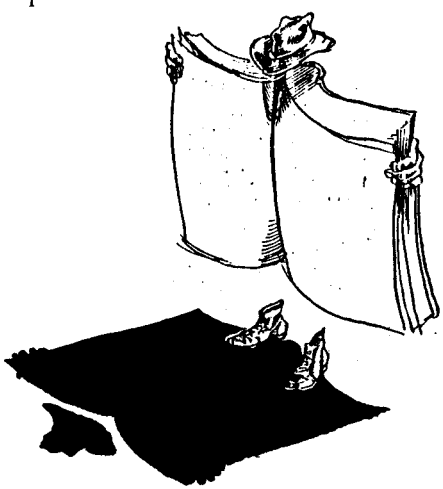
may have noticed that what he was unwrapping under the Christmas tree was something more than simply their ideology.

Even from the blood-shot eyes of Adorno's aesthetics, it is difficult to make a case for these movies being typical ideological shock troops of the culture industry. Adorno's main criterion for aesthetic legitimacy, i.e., that the artwork avoids false reconciliations and, instead, exposes the fracturing of the totality in a way that the subject experiences in the first person, and not vicariously, the message conveyed, is not really violated in these movies. Capra's efforts to Americanize Goethe by recycling George Bailey as a frustrated Faust may be bush league in some quarters, but actually gets the same point across not, as with Goethe, at the dawn of capitalism, but at dusk, when most of the damage has already been done and, unlike in the beginning of the 19th century, the only community possible is a fully reconstituted one. It is impossible to guess what Adorno may have said about these movies if he ever saw them, but he certainly could not have mainlined them in his analysis of the culture industry the way Luke seems to do. Avoiding false reconciliations need not entail the constant depiction of a world embroiled in irreversible *Angst* — especially if these depictions are provided by well-fed theoreticians sipping martinis in the famous Grand Hotel at the edge of the abyss. At any rate, it is fairly clear by now that Adorno and Horkheimer were probably exaggerating the problems of an America they began to understand only in the 1950s, when Adorno finished *Minima Moralia*, well after they had already given up on it and returned to Europe. So the movie goers who saw the movies in question did so passively, as would have been the case with watching any other movie. If they got anything out of them it was probably a better appreciation of the role of traditional values in a context in which they were being rapidly eroded. Suffering through Schoenberg could have enhanced the subject's awareness of a totality gone beserk and of subjectivity's ability and duty to resist it, but in Flatbush George Bailey may have had a more lasting impact.



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Reviews:

Divergent Histories of Sexual Science

Lawrence Birken, *Consuming Desire: Sexual Science and the Emergence of a Culture of Abundance, 1871-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 167 pp.
Cynthia Eagle Russett, *Sexual Science: The Historical Construction of Womanhood* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 245 pp.

In its historical trajectory, sexual science changed from a more repressive into a more liberating enterprise and, parallel to it, genetic science came to displace pseudo-scientific eugenics. But both developments came too late to prevent the political and social catastrophes brought about by racist Social Darwinism. As intellectual historians, Birken and Russett keep their distance from the brute facts of political and social history and, as Americanists, they limit themselves mainly to the English and American scene. Here the similarity ends. They differ in that Birken is more programmatic; Russett, more backward-looking. He conveys a sense of optimism and enthusiasm; she, one of skepticism and irony. He likes the grand sweep; she, the close reading. Birken goes for the big structural causes; Russett, for subtler psychological ones. Lest this sound like gender stereotyping, let me hasten to add the generational difference. Russett, a securely established scholar, writes with calm detachment and wry amusement. No doubt, some readers would like her to show more anger, especially at points where she seems to accept that early sexual scientists adhered to recognized canons, although they lacked fairness and compassion. Birken, just embarking on his career, feels the academic pressures that make obeisance to theorists such as Baudrillard and Foucault a ritual necessity. No doubt, some readers would like him to be less beholden to the French dispensation.

Sexual science was part and parcel of the general ascendancy of science in the 19th century, but in particular, as Russett suggests, it was a response to the "historical moment in which women were asserting new claims to a life beyond the domestic hearth" (3). From the philosophers' ideals of natural rights and human commonality, hard-headed scientists moved to the "facts" of human difference and social differentiation. Much of Victorian science amounted to a vast defense of the bourgeois order in the face of the "Social Question." At the same time, the evolutionary theory of man's descent created a "cosmic nightmare"

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for the erstwhile lords of creation. Sexual science, too, was in large measure a defensive enterprise: "In denying to women a coequal role in society, scientists sought to stabilize at least one set of relations and, by inserting lesser orders (women, savages) between themselves and the apes, to distance themselves from the animality and erosion of status that Darwinism seemed to imply. . . . Women and the lesser races served to buffer Victorian gentlemen from a too-threatening intimacy with the brutes" (14).

Thus Russett emphasizes two causes, the political challenge from the women's movement and the psychological threat felt by Victorian gentlemen in the wake of the evolutionary "role reversal" — from angelic to simian likeness — suggested by one of their own. These are reasonable causal attributions, but Russett is less concerned with demonstrating their plausibility than with a painstaking narrative account of what went by the name of science. In particular, she investigates the extent to which outrageous male fantasies remained compatible with contemporary scientific standards. The most striking fact about theories of sexual science was, after all, "the absence at the time of most, indeed virtually all, of the data we would today deem relevant to a discussion of sex differences: data from genetics and endocrinology, from neuroanatomy and neurophysiology, from Freudian psychology and measurements of intelligence and personality" (11). Whereas John Stuart Mill prudently professed ignorance about the balance of natural and cultural differences between the sexes, Darwin accused him of lacking scientific understanding. But scientists were not deterred by their own ignorance from advancing the most unwarranted claims.

Actually, for Russett the story of "biology" (a term invented around 1800) begins in a relatively benign manner. An important part of it was phrenology, the study of mental faculties as revealed by the shaping of the skull. The phrenological enthusiasts, such as Henry Ward Beecher, were reformist optimists and relatively open to women's aspirations, including admission to medical schools. The Ethnological Society of London, founded in 1843, was an offshoot of Quaker and Evangelical philanthropy and subscribed to the brotherhood of man, including the "darker brothers." But phrenology lost out to physical anthropology. In a deliberate move to create a rival organization, James Hunt founded the Anthropological Society of London and gave it the mission "to show that human equality is one of the most unwarranted assumptions ever invented by man." A bitter opponent of John Stuart Mill, he charged that Mill's metaphysical position could not but make him demand "the suffrage for the Negro and the woman." Russett correctly insists that "the issues of race and sex were intimately related — not two separate problems but two aspects of the same problem" (27f.). This was to have fateful consequences, but these are beyond the purview of her study.

In France, matters were, if possible, worse. Paul Broca, who founded the Anthropological Society in 1859, and his pupil, Paul Topinard, made Paris the center of racial typology and craniological enthusiasm. Deeply convinced of the inferiority of blacks and women, Broca compulsively performed 180,000

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measurements — certainly a grim illustration of Max Weber's "science as a vocation," whereby the dividing line between passion (*Leidenschaft*) and pathology tends to vanish.[1] Russett reviews the sorry story of the craniological craze that was fixated on "the missing five ounces of female brain" and quotes the often cited passage from Topinard about the female cranium being intermediate between that of the child and of the adult male (36, 54). Topinard's *Anthropology* was for a long time the French and English standard text. Many German scholars chimed in, for instance, T.L.W. Bischoff, who was also one of Durkheim's authorities.

For women and their male sympathizers, there were two strategies to counter the discriminations of physical anthropology and sexual science: to search for new evidence that would invalidate the ruling views or to turn the tables on scientific authority and employ accepted theory for feminist purposes. From the 1890s on, Havelock Ellis became ever more critical of craniology and alleged "facts" about gender differences in the several revised editions of his famous book, *Man and Woman*.[2] But if men like Ellis or Karl Pearson overturned received scientific wisdom and saw themselves as supporters of some women's causes, they also upheld the ideology of motherhood and promoted the new eugenics movement. Thus Russett can judge fairly: "If Pearson and Ellis were friends of woman, she hardly needed enemies" (124).

Alternatively, feminists like Charlotte Perkins Gilman used Darwin and Spencer for "wickedly revolutionary conclusions" (13). Gilman was particularly skillful in exploiting evolutionary theory for her purposes — the advocacy of women's complete economic independence and the professionalization of housework and childcare — but many feminists accepted the prevailing scientific views on evolutionary gender differentation no less trustingly than the male establishment. When Patrick Geddes and Arthur Thompson, criticizing Darwin's theory of sexual selection, asserted the biological permanence of sexual differences in their widely read *The Evolution of Sex* in 1889, they provided support for influential leaders like Jane Addams and other feminists who held essentialist notions, including a belief in woman's innate moral superiority.

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1. See H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 135. Let us also remember that the young Emile Durkheim naively accepted such scientific authority for his gender theory in *The Division of Social Labor*, and that his theory of unequal gender complementarity was part of a general scientific consensus. See my essay on "Durkheim and the Principles of 1789: The Issue of Gender Equality" in this issue.

2. By 1912 Franz Oppenheimer could tell the second convention of the German Society for Sociology that "the bastion of craniometry has been completely reduced." See his speech on "Die rassentheoretische Geschichtsphilosophie," Oct. 22, 1912 in *Verhandlungen des Zweiten Deutschen Soziologentages* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1913), p. 113. He had no inkling that this scientific advance would remain politically irrelevant and would not prevent his political persecution two decades later.

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Darwin remains, however, a crucial figure in the history of sexual science. In spite of their dissimilar approaches, both Russett and Birken are well-disposed toward him, separating the ism from the man and his basic theory. Russett lauds "the tentativeness and the cautiousness of his recommendations . . . in the context of Victorian science Darwin was among the most gentle and moderate of men . . . . *The Descent of Man* did not validate the oppression of women" (101, 103). Although he believed men to be more intelligent than women, he waffled on the question of the sex-linked transmission of intelligence. Russett recalls that Gilman, combining the environmentalist and the innatist perspective, made much of the discrepancy, so troubling to Darwin, between the more equal or independent role of the female in nature and her subordination to the male in culture. Such inconsistencies and ambiguities make it possible to claim Darwin for progressive rather than conservative causes. Indeed, in some respects Darwin is for Birken the "real founder of sexology" and Freud "merely the most talented of Darwin's numerous intellectual progeny." Although Darwin came to temper his theory of random variations and natural selection with a unidirectional developmental theory, in essence his "evolutionary monism subverted the distinction both between male and female and between heterogenitality and perversion," since "in the Darwinian state of nature, there were only genderless, desiring creatures" (7). In fact, Birken's basic theory is that, despite all efforts to retard sexual liberation, Victorian sexual science was a self-defeating enterprise. What appears to Russett, from a feminist perspective, as "the dismal history of sexual science," reveals itself in Birken's dialectical perspective as a peculiarly "perverse" instance of the historical cunning of reason promoting "the democratization of desire," for man, woman, and child. Unwittingly, Darwin undermined the old notions of eternal gender differences and even anticipated the sexualization of women and children that Freud later expounded. Birken's central claim is that "the sexualization of women and children, implicit in Darwin, thus signaled the extension of the democratic or individualist model to the furthest limit" (8). Since sexualization implies "a fundamentally genderless human nature" in view of "humankind's transsexual ancestry in the [Darwinian] state of nature," the idea of universal citizenship had only now found a viable basis (73).

In contrast to Russett's straight-forward account, Birken's analysis zigzags through Western history, here emphasizing one feature and there leaving out another. Whereas Russett tries to understand Victorian gentlemen on their own terms, paying close attention to their words, Birken explains them as pawns, if not dupes, of impersonal developmental forces. Dressed up in the garb of a "new intellectual history," he harks back to some old-fashioned *Entwicklungsgeschichte* and three-stage schemes. Ostensibly following Foucault, the arch-enemy of developmental history, he asks some old Weberian questions, such as "why the West alone produced a sexual science . . . more generally, why the West produced science at all." Since "Foucault himself did not live

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long enough to answer these questions in any satisfactory way . . . my aim is to go beyond Foucault's work and find my own answers" (2).[3] Substantively, this means disagreeing with his views of sexology as too negative. Birken then proceeds to treat sexology not as a science, as Russett does to a considerable extent, but as ideology — even as mythology.

A major difficulty lies in the manner in which Birken tries to relate political democratization, economic consumerism, and radically idiosyncratic sexuality — desire becoming an end in itself. He stretches the terms in the three realms until they become applicable beyond their specific sphere and over a broad historical landscape. Although the book's subtitle refers to the period from 1871 to 1914, from Darwin's *The Descent of Man* and *Selection in Relation to Sex* to Freud's universalization of sex in "On Narcissism," Birken reaches far back into the High Middle Ages and forward to the 1980s. Writing as an unabashed Whig, he quickly traces a programmatic history of the West from the individualism and "democracy" of the aristocratic peer group through bourgeois "possessive individualism" to the individualism of desire in a culture of abundance. Where Russett concludes her study by summarizing how, between 1860 and 1910, "liberty, equality, and fraternity came under scientific attack as discredited metaphysical fictions of the unscientific 18th century" (201), Birken starts out with a theory of Western democratization which culminates in Darwin inadvertantly creating "the basis for a universal concept of liberty and equality that could include individuals of both sexes" (10). Following Traian Stoianovich, he points out that the French Revolution led to a "virilization" of the bourgeois male, resulting in a sharp separation between the woman, who remained consigned to the "holistic" patriarchal family, and the citizen. This ideology of gender differentiation was subverted when a consumerist worldview became ascendant over the productivist one, in rough correspondence to the transition from the proto-industrial stage to the industrial culture of mass consumption.

In this context, sexology, with all its contradictions, appears as a transitional phenomenon between production-oriented and consumer-oriented culture. It stood in homologous relation to neoclassical marginal utility theory, which focused on consumer choice and thus was another instance of "the democratization implicit in a consumerist perspective" (30). In Birken's analysis, in contrast to Russett's, the historical women's movement does not even show up as a significant factor in the shaping of sexual science. There is only the cursory statement that "in the process of this shift, the position of women began to be substantially redefined, often by women themselves" (126).

Since Birken is more interested in the meaning than in the narrative history of sexual science, he can turn sexology almost into a trope for the individualist

3. Even when he talks about the developmental history of the West, Birken does not mention Weber, presumably because he is antipathetic to the theorist of inner-worldly asceticism and the ethical integration of personality. For a fresh account, see Klaus Lichtblau, "Eros and Culture: Gender Theory in Simmel, Tönnies and Weber," in this issue of *Telos*.

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dynamics of Western civilization. In his conclusion, however, he claims that he had been "simply suggesting that the sexualization of women and children may have constituted a symbolic representation of their idiosyncratic desire and claim to citizenship" (18). Whether trope or symbolic representation, these are the views of a small number of male intellectuals. Even Russett asked herself whether the ideas of a group of Victorian scientific gentlemen mattered at all, although she answered affirmatively: "When scientists spoke, Victorians listened" (206). One could add: Where the Victorian gentlemen merely spoke, the Nazis acted! Indeed, many of these gentlemen were quite active in pursuing various eugenic policies long before the Nazis. Birken's mythology of a democratization of desire appears plausible only so long as one disregards the inseparable historical relation, on both the ideational and the personal level, between eugenics and sexology. For the period, one might even be inclined to read sexology as a subtext of eugenics. Whereas Russett demonstrates the close connection between the two, Birken omits it altogether; there is not one entry on eugenics in the index. The period with which both authors deal represented not only "a dialectical development beyond the productivist phase of Western culture" (140), it also ushered in a sinister era in which a negative dialectic led to a novel husbanding rather than a democratization of desire.

Eugenics was a new holism (in Birken's terms): the national community, the folk or some similar biological macroentity, not the desires of individuals, became analytically and politically crucial. Eugenics was not simply a relapse into a productivist mentality, as Birken might be tempted to argue. It promoted the production of healthy bodies no less than the prevention or elimination of "unworthy life." Francis Galton, who coined the term eugenics, would, in the words of his closest pupil, Karl Pearson, "have done his best to check the reproduction of the lower grades" (Russett, 202). What this Victorian gentleman only dreamed about, eugenic state measures realized — and much besides. In a recent reprise of some of the themes of his book, Birken drew a parallel between the persecution of the Jews of Germany in the 1930s and the situation of homosexuals in the US today.[4] He suggested that many Germans felt guilty about embracing the postmodern culture that some Jews had adopted and therefore turned on them. Similarly, American society turns against the homosexual because the abolition of the distinction between heterosexuality and homosexuality has become inevitable under the pressures of the consumerist culture. Hence the "homosexual has become the Jew in the Age of Desire." Strikingly, the analogy with the German Jews leaves out the Holocaust of the 1940s, when the differences between men, women and children were obliterated in common annihilation. The point is that, even today, the mentality of consumerist culture is only one facet of Western civilization. As Peter Weingart and his coauthors have pointed out, the scientific program of producing and destroying human beings

4. See Lawrence Birken, "Commodification and Sexology," *Telos* 81 (Winter 89/90), p. 171.

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has been interrupted for the time being, but the dangers remain.[5]

Finally, Birken comes up against the perennial quandary of intellectual history: how to relate to institutional history. The story of the West should be one of increasing personal freedom irrespective of gender. But this universalist personalism requires impersonal institutional safeguards. Even under the most benign of circumstances, there is an irreducible dialectic between personal freedom and institutional restraint. Here Birken's ambiguous title, *Consuming Desire*, comes into its own: Does it mean all-powerful desire? Exhausting desire? Consuming what and whom? In his epilogue, Birken takes issue with Left and Right conservatives and the feminists in between, from Christopher Lasch to George Gilder and Carol Gilligan, and opposes "a neo-Enlightenment vision of people as heterogenital reproducers," but he does not match their critiques with a suggestion of his own about what a "more extensive democracy of genderless consumers" should look like (142, 153). If the democratization of desire is another word for sexual permissiveness, it should be acknowleldged that sexual liberation must be safeguarded by institutional measures against sexual discrimination, harassment, and abuse. What threatens to make Birken's own analysis ideological is the manner in which he interprets Western history single-mindedly as a "democratization of desire," when it is not clear what is going to happen to bodies.

Guenther Roth

5. See Peter, Weingart, Jürgen Kroll and Kurt Bayertz, *Geschichte der Eugenik und Rassenhygiene in Deutschland* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1988).

Adorno's Kierkegaard

Theodor W. Adorno, *Kierkegaard: Construction of the Aesthetic*, trans. by Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, Theory and History of Literature, Vol. 81, 1989).

Adorno's study of Kierkegaard was written in 1929-30 as his *Habilitationsschrift* under the direction of Paul Tillich, after his analysis of the unconscious in Freud and Kant had been rejected by Hans Cornelius. Even by comparison

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with his other works, it is densely argued and forbidding. The translator, Robert Hullot-Kentor, aims to preserve the original difficulty of the text as inseparable from its meaning. The English version should not simplify through syntax, paragraphing, or familiar references that "act as tour guides" for a clueless audience.[1] We thus read this work panting with the effort to discern its method or recognize a familiar Kierkegaard. Hullot-Kentor's opening summary of themes, however, offers support for our struggle.

Already functioning in Adorno's work are the sense of space opened up by a dialectical critique and the severe sense of hope that clings to reified life. The themes of his mature writing are already striking, in particular the interplay between the abstract, the mythical, and the destructive. The "logic of disintegration" that tracks Kierkegaard's concepts in such unfamiliar ways prefigures the later negative dialectic. The laborious emergence of this brilliant method of interpretation is a remarkable event. Kierkegaard's concepts are pulled free of the author's control and set on collision courses that disrupt every conventional reading. The mutual antagonism that springs up between these ideas is the motion that may carry thought (and life) closer to transformation.

Adorno's criticism is crushing: Kierkegaard embodies idealism in its most life-despising form. Only in the final pages — where the lowly aesthetic is constructed in a new key — do the possibilities lurking in this turn toward subjectivity emerge, but only "faintly." Illumination of the concrete occurs where Kierkegaard least expected it — in the realm of images. Kierkegaard had long lulled readers into believing that idealism had been surpassed by more concrete perspectives. Engagement with existentialism, such as Marcuse's attention to Heidegger,[2] was also one strand in the recovery of Western Marxists from dogmatic thought and defeated politics. As Susan Buck-Morss observes,[3] Adorno sought to deflect the swelling interest in existentialism toward Marxism.

The young Adorno had pondered Kierkegaard's writings for years and well understood their fascination. Of the various sources inspiring Adorno during this intensely formative period, Walter Benjamin's collaboration was crucial. Benjamin's study of the Baroque shaped Adorno's insights into Kierkegaard's gloomy sensibilities. Through immersion in their subject matter, both constructed ideas, images, or constellations which could awaken new understandings of the present situation. This resonance with an interpreting present suggests that the meanings released by the text change with the reading context. The process — described as "exact fantasy" — moves the elements of the text into designs or crystallizations unforeseen by the author, combining strict attention to the text

1. Robert Hullot-Kentor, "Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*: The Translation," in *Telos*, no. 65 (Fall 1985), p. 145.

2. Herbert Marcuse, "Contribution to a Phenomenology of Historical Materialism (1928)," in *Telos*, no. 4 (Fall 1969), pp. 12ff.

3. Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin and the Frankfurt School* (New York and London: The Free Press, 1977), p. xiii.

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with unsettling interpretations. By seeing history or a familiar text as suddenly strange and socially expressive, a demystified materialism emerges in criticism. Fantasy, by "carving out a sphere of freedom in the midst of determination,"[4] is the utopian impulse that reveals possibilities not evident in the conventional reading.

Read as an idealist, Kierkegaard is neither poet nor neurotic but philosopher and systematizer. Adorno finds little artistic merit in Kierkegaard's plots or characters; they are commissioned to illustrate ideas, not acquire their own life. Indirect discourse disguises Kierkegaard's actual achievement: the imposition of a ruling schema upon experience that crudely apes a dialectical advance, e.g., from aesthetic to ethical and religious life. His failure is profound: he shows less affinity for reality than Hegel or Kant in their most speculative moments. Supposedly devoted to the personal, his writings largely ignore friendship, community, love, eroticism, even marriage. Here indeed is the ethical standpoint "that leaves the world as it is." The so-called rescue of the concrete and turn towards subjectivity in fact abolishes both.

Adorno's reversals are harsh, unnerving and fascinating in turn. In this reading, Kierkegaard is less Christian prophet than mythological thinker, rapt not with redemption but with the demonic, beholden to a God hungry not for love but tribute. Kierkegaard shows no fondness for reality, but the systematic drive consumes him. His system "inverts and interiorizes Hegel" by sacrificing the totality for the instant in which human meets divine, in which totality is swallowed up by the moment. Truth for Kierkegaard is secured by the paradox.

The degeneration of idealism is visible in the common logic that rules these concepts: existence, passion, paradox, the stages, the interior. Kierkegaard links "mediation" with the Hegelian strategy that eliminates the subjective. A dualism that cannot be mediated must be broken or bridged. Earlier idealism had appreciated action at least in the labor of thinking, if not in material praxis. Thinking through the contradictions of one category produces a new concept. Kierkegaard's dynamic borrows from Fichte, not Hegel: decisive striving and indeterminate content. The leap is bloodless, an invocation that marks the incommensurable. While mediation shapes conflicts into new meanings, a leap conjures meanings from the disappearance of content. Passing "beyond" the ethical — surrendering all expectations — allows for a religious surge. A persistent zeal that repels all specific content — like money from use value — is the sign of worthiness.

For Adorno, Abraham's fate becomes Kierkegaard's method: reason, history, sensuality, nature, relationships, duty, the integrity of a self are all immolated during our purification. For example, ethical decisiveness carries us beyond aesthetic worldliness by sacrificing the visible world of consequences

4. Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. by Christian Lenhardt (London: Routledge, 1984), p. 249.

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and pleasures as well as the invisible world of duty or reason. Once the will is without an object, it turns inward to sacrifice itself, and this purged self marks the final crisis of idealism. "Kierkegaard's dialectic swings between the negation of consciousness and its unchallenged authority. His spiritualism, the historical figure of objectless inwardness, is to be understood according to the immanent logic of the crisis of idealism. For Kierkegaard, consciousness must have pulled itself free from all external being by a movement of 'infinite resignation'; through choice and decisiveness, it must have freely posited every content in order finally . . . to surrender its omnipotence and, foundering, to purify itself of the guilt it acquired in having supposed itself autonomous" (107).

This "horror of history" felt by Kierkegaard exacts a heavy price. Desire spirited away from a demoralizing world is sacrificed to mythical masters. The real abstractness of modern society switches into gnostic polarities and urgent repetitions, as if zeal will summon water in this wilderness. The mythical emerges in the hellish and unchanging state of nature that opposes spirit. All idealism — Adorno includes Marxism — seeks escape from its imprisonment within consciousness by hammering away with "an exclusive category, an undeviating intention, a distinguising trait, that under the rule of the idea of totality acknowledged by all these philosophies is intended to mollify the rigidity of this imprisonment" (106). Feuerbach's "humanity," Hegel's "idea," Marx's "commodity," and Kierkegaard's "paradoxical sacrifice" substitute for the denser reality that system never manages to reenact. The repugnant externality follows Kierkegaard on his plunges into spirit. Since Kierkegaard despairs of reconciliation in history — freedom cannot appear in a petrified world — it cannot emerge inwardly. Without an object to sustain it, desire remains blank. The absence of such transforming experiences as human mutuality, divine forgiveness, or healing sensuality leaves cycles of deprivation. Not hope but mourning for all that has been lost is the central emotion in Kierkegaard's thought.

Because a social perspective becomes suddenly apparent in the midst of these entangled concepts, Adorno moves between deconstruction and critique. Kierkegaard's awareness of a desperately faulty world is inversely reflected in the agony or passion that brings forth meaning. Adorno looks for clues to Kierkegaard's concepts in the public world supposedly renounced by the subjective thinker. Mirrored in a barren philosophy is the rentier living off inheritance and scorning the economic mainstream. Though Kierkegaard was "more foreign to the social order than any other idealist thinker" (39), condemning in general what was overlooked in the particular, the clue to the subjective thinker lies in the public world he supposedly renounces. In a wonderful way, Adorno evokes the interior of a 19th century bourgeois apartment to depict an inwardness that "spies" on the street through mirrors and cherishes nature in the form of desk trinkets from foreign lands. Behind its curtains, external events register slight tremors. "Space does not enter the *intérieur*, it is only its boundary. . . . Just as external history is 'reflected' in internal history, in the *intérieur* space is

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semblance. . . . The contents of the *intérieur* are mere decoration . . . deprived of their own use value, . . . like a still life. Here, in the image, lost objects are conjured" (43-44). As the glassed-in showroom illustrates consumer availability, these silent chambers embody life that is "still" stirred only by fantasies. In his journals, Kierkegaard recalls walking down hallways with his father while imaging Copenhagen street scenes. The fantasy offers pleasures missing from the real. The rentier, like the spiritual thinker, is sidelined in a bustling commercial realm and left to dream.

The extremity of Kierkegaard's concepts reflects the effort to rescue individuals from reifying practices without challenging these practices. With everything for sale and "everyone loved much too little," inwardness becomes the designated "other" that lies beyond the marketplace. The implicit social content emerges from Adorno's 1939 article, "Kierkegaard's Doctrine of Love," as a utopian impulse within this preoccupation with death and sacrifice. In a world so out of joint, Christian values appear distorted, if they emerge at all. "Kierkegaard's view of our love for the dead . . . is both the worst and the best part of his doctrine. . . . The bad side is obvious: love for the dead . . . excludes the reciprocity of love that necessarily takes the beloved one as living himself. But, at the same time, it is love absolutely void of any barter, of any 'requital,' and therefore the only unmutilated love permitted by our society."[5] By opting for purity — the realization of the "concept" — severed connections to actual relationships and social practices become conditions of salvation. In a journal entry, Kierkegaard admits to an odd kinship with Schopenhauer; withdrawal from the abyss of ordinary life is a common strand.

While Kierkegaard skims over ethics and ignores social theory, his insights into public practices are keener than Adorno allows, e.g., in "The Two Ages" Kierkegaard observes how integrity survives in an all-consuming public world. Detachment, subterfuge and irony are ploys to liberate a personal zone and nurture desire in secret. Self-mockingly, Kierkegaard praises anonymity and failure in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Our freedom requires that we ought to live "invisibly," seeking no followers, impact, agreement, or success. Book sales should pay the bills but not create a sensation. We should turn away from our achievements and refuse to dilute intensity with judgments of effectiveness.

For those who jump off the locomotive of history rather than trying to stop or steer it, a counter-cultural code of subjectivity tacitly contrasts with the objective code of theologians, journalists, historians, etc. Extricating oneself from the "big pictures" leaves objective uncertainty, subjective decisiveness, and the

5. Theodor W. Adorno, "Kierkegaard's Doctrine of Love," in *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science*, no. 8 (1939-40), p. 427.

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realm of possibility that supports both. While Kierkegaard's rhetoric falls short of an ethic, he is attuned to the deadening routines of ordinary life. Parodies such as "The Rotation Method" as well as the brilliant portraits of *Sickness Unto Death* sketch the various despairs encouraged by *this* social world.

For Adorno, Kierkegaard's greatest achievement is inadvertent and occurs when the author is not striving for solutions. His earliest writings, especially the "Diapsamalta" which begins *Either/Or*, express hope and sadness for the things of this world. The aesthete, sunk into longing and despair, is not "objectless" like his decisive spiritual brethren. The spectator unable to enter into the rhythms of life is also unable to transcend them. This is not the detachment of the knight of faith, who affirms all events, but the outsider whose desires are specific and unrealized, numb but not impervious.

Adorno's reversal of the usual reading is dramatic: Kierkegaard is most religious (and closer to social critique) in the images where hope and grief converge. "The inability of fantasy to represent despair is its surety of hope;" nature "presents itself as rescued" and "fantasy transforms the traces of the collapse of a sinful creation into a sign of hope for one that is whole and without sin and whose image it forms out of ruins" (138-39). The dreamer desires reconciliation, not transcendence or sacrifice of nature; her desire is fragile and fleeting, not uncompromising. Though Kierkegaard is not an artist, his crystallizations of emotion — charged with poetic power — are not pulverized by a system's requirements. The images — cast off by their author — respect the human dilemma more eloquently than purity of heart. "It is the cell of a materialism whose vision is focused on a 'better world' not to forget in dreams the present world, but to change it by the strength of an image" (130-31). In this construction of Kierkegaard's aesthetic, Adorno finds a philosophical practice akin to his own. Still, images are manipulated more readily than most human activities in a market economy. Adorno will pull back from this trust in concrete particulars to pursue dialectical studies of the concepts of capitalist culture.

Adorno unravels the Kierkegaardian legend, but does not abolish the author's central concern. How do we approach subjectivity without Kierkegaard's indifference to society or ambivalence to embodiment? How does the impersonal paradoxically become the guardian of the personal? If not in spiritual life alone, where are the spaces which shelter desire and the small practices that defy systems? Kierkegaard's neglect of objective spirit, the particular relations and situations that nurture as well as deform personality, is most damning. He leaves our longing for transcendence with a hopeless task — in turning toward the infinite to restore all that is absent from this world. Despite surviving the reefs of despair, Kierkegaard's believer still triumphs in the ambiguous Cartesian manner: with nature indifferent to meaning, one's only recourse is to turn inward for truth.

Jeanne A. Schuler

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The Moral Blindness of Paul de Man

Paul de Man, *Wartime Journalism: 1939-1943* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 399 pp.
Responses: On Paul de Man's Wartime Journalism, ed. by Werner Mamacher, Neil Hertz and Thomas Keenan (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 477 pp.

When Paul de Man died in December 1983 he was arguably the most influential figure in American literary studies. The critical theory of deconstruction he had taught to faithful Yale graduate students and numerous other readers, though sharply attacked from the beginning, had gradually gained ascendancy in the academy. Moreover, it is clear from the eulogies of almost all who knew de Man — at least in his American career — that beyond the intellectual force he exerted, the man himself inspired enormous devotion. Giamatti, president of Yale at the time of de Man's death, spoke for many in his memorial tribute: "A tremendous light for humane life and learning is gone and nothing for us will ever be the same. I think of Paul de Man always in terms of lucidity, as a radiant presence. 'Brilliance' is a word that takes on a special and full meaning when it is associated with him . . . I shall always see his shy and candid smile. It was luminous, and wordlessly encouraged us to be better."[1] Nearly four years later it was discovered that the luminous de Man had spent the early part of WWII writing articles, one at least openly anti-Semitic, for a Nazi-controlled Belgian newspaper — and deliberately neglected to confess the fact to even his closest friends, much less offer any public apology.

The seriousness with which these revelations are being taken is indicated by the sheer size of the two volumes published by Nebraska University Press, the first reproducing some 200 articles de Man wrote during the war, the second consisting of 38 "responses" to the whole affair and running brutally to nearly 500 oversized pages, or the length of four standard books. Even detracting for the mammoth self-importance of the editors (Werner Hamacher called on a battery of no less than five translators to render his nearly nearly 30,000 word contribution from German into English), clearly there is a great deal at stake here. Beyond just the reputation of an individual, the reputation of deconstruction itself is, to use one of de Man's favorite expressions, being "put into question." Thus the case of Paul de Man resolves itself into two issues: 1)

1. A. Bartlett Giamatti, "In Memoriam," *Yale French Studies 69* (1985), p. 6.

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the nature and extent of de Man's collaboration, and 2) the relation, if any, between his behavior during the war and his subsequent critical theory.

To clarify the first of these issues, it is necessary to give a brief chronology of crucial events in Belgium in the early 1940s and de Man's concurrent journalism. On May 28, 1940, less than three weeks after the Nazi *Blitzkrieg* of neutral Belgium, King Leopold III surrendered the Belgian army unconditionally. The occupying forces almost immediately seized control of the largest Belgian newspaper, *Le Soir*, henceforth derisively known to loyalist Belgians as *Le Soir volé*. On August 29, a concentration camp was created at Breendonck, between Brussels, where de Man resided, and his hometown of Antwerp. By October 28, an ordinance was issued which required Jews to register and carry identity cards and banishes them from civil service, law, teaching, press and radio, effective December 31. On Christmas Eve, just a week before the ban takes effect, de Man's first piece appeared in *Le Soir*. On March 4, 1941, de Man contributed his most notorious article "*Les Juifs dans la Littérature actuelle*" in which, after chastising vulgar anti-Semitism, he offers his own version: "There would not have been much hope for the future of our civilization if it had allowed itself to be invaded without resistance by a foreign force. In keeping its originality and character intact, despite the Semitic meddling into all aspects of European life, it has shown that its nature was healthy at the core. Furthermore, one sees therefore that a solution to the Jewish question which envisions the creation of a Jewish colony isolated from Europe would not lead to deplorable consequences for the literary life of the rest. It would lose, all told, a few personalities of mediocre value and would continue, as in the past, to develop according to its own principles." On the same day as two synagogues are sacked and burned in Antwerp in an anti-Jewish riot (April 14), de Man is lamenting anti-German sentiment: "Having undergone long years of the brain-washing of French and English propaganda, the Belgian reader is unaware of all that has been done in Germany from a social and political point of view." By the summer, however, active resistance to the occupation is increasing, as well as repressive counter-measures, including torture and execution. In response, *Le Soir* takes the editorial position that resistance is "false patriotism" (July 16), an opinion which de Man seconds (August 26) by referring to those who refused to accept "the more equitable" Nazi reorganization of Europe as "blinded by nationalistic passions" and calling on all "men of good will" to join in collaboration.

The situation became grimmer in 1942. On June 1, Jews were required to wear yellow stars; on July 8, virtually all books by and about Jews were banned (on this very day de Man's photo — subsequently used by the resistance in their *Galerie des traitres* — appeared on the front page of *Le Soir* as the representative judge in their book contest "*concours litteraire du Soir*"); on August 4, the first group of Belgian Jews were sent to Auschwitz. De Man, who has never repudiated the opinion that Hitler expressed the soul of the German People, "a people which finds itself called upon to exercise, in its turn, hegemony in Europe" (October 28, 1941) refuses to blame the Nazis for thecurrent horror. In reviewing a

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poem on September 1, he praises the author for the applicability of his work to events of the moment: "For everything that is happening now is not the blind and unpitying action of destiny, but the consequence of a sin, or an accumulation of moral sins, committed over the ages. The use of such a trial is to make this culpability sensible, to make the crowds see that they have acted evilly. As a consequence, the harsher the chastisemen, the greater the hope of seeing, at last, arise true values which will permit a harmonious way of life, instead of the false facilities which have conducted to catastrophe." That autumn, the Belgian government-in-exile offered amnesty to all journalists working for collaborationist newspapers who ceased writing by the end of the year. In November, the battle of Stalingrad begins, Rommel is defeated at El-Alamein, and American troops land in North Africa. To many at the time this looked like the turning point in the war, an Allied victory assured.[2] At the end of November de Man's last article appeared in *Le Soir*. He returned to Antwerp and apparently spendt most of the rest of the war working on a translation of *Moby Dick*. Two months after his retirement, his successor at *Le Soir* was assassinated by the resistance.

To be scrupulously fair to de Man, it should be pointed out that he is reported to have sheltered some Jewish friends at a time when this was illegal and gave no evidence in his private life then or later of sincerely harboring anti-Semitic sentiments (though the question of his sincerity is something of a luxury, dwarfed as it must be by the potential *effect* of his public expressions). After the war he set up a publishing house, a shady business from whose debts he escaped by emigrating to the US in 1948. The following year, with the help of Mary McCarthy, he began his American academic career as a French instructor at Bard College and married one of his students, without apparently having bothered to divorce his European wife (deposited in Brazil) with whom he had three sons.[3] The past that he worked so hard to sever came back only briefly to haunt him when, in 1955, he was anonymously denounced to the Society of Fellows at Harvard where he was working on his graduate degree. In a letter seen only by the Society, he responded by lying about the years he wrote for *Le Soir* — he said he stopped writing in 1941 and claimed he left "when Nazi thought-control did no longer allow freedom of statement." In an apparent attempt to explain how someone might mistakenly have questioned his own loyalties, he falsely identified his uncle, who was sentenced *in absentia* to 20 years in prison for collaboration, as his father. As time went on, de Man's memory got even worse. When asked how he spent the war, he either claimed he was a translator in England or, in more dashing moments, alluded to a career in the resistance.[4]

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2. Alice Yaeger Kaplan, "Paul de Man, *Le Soir*, and the Francophone Collaboration," in *Responses: On Paul de Man's Wartime Journalism*, p. 277. Hereafter all references to *Responses* will be given in parentheses in the text.

3. James Atlas, "The Case of Paul de Man," *N Y Times Magazine* (April 28, 1988), p. 69.

4. In a letter to Harvard professor, Harry Levin, de Man spoke of "the long and painful soul-searching of those who, like myself, come from the left and the happy days of the Front Populaire."

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The portrait of de Man that presents itself to any reasonably objective observer is that of a rather unsavory opportunist, a man who used a collaborationist newspaper as a career opening and stayed on long after events had become intolerable to anyone who wished to face reality; a man who resigned when to continue would have been dangerous; a man who covered up this past to ensure his second career in America. Unfortunately, this is not how it appears to a number of de Man's former students and associates in *Responses*, which in many ways makes for sadder reading than the journalism itself. Shortly before his death, de Man claimed that in the battle over deconstructive theory "the stakes are enormous," and presumably, beyond personal affection for the man, this goes a long way toward explaining why clearly intelligent people who have themselves launched careers based on deconstruction should be so unwilling to acknowledge the obvious.

It should be pointed out from the start that the defenders do not feel very comfortable with history and would have undoubtedly gone on blithely ignoring it had it not been for the discovery that de Man had a past. If one believes, as they do, that our words bear only a metaphoric relation to the world and that, therefore, properly speaking, there are no facts, merely interpretations, it is difficult to talk with any firmness of historical evidence. Derrida, for example, even when speaking about the straightforward events of his own life — the fact that he was once arrested and imprisoned — feels obliged to remind us that this is "what is called the objective truth" as though he were about to lead us through some sort of parallel universe. Yet, while on the whole Derrida has toned down his usual rhetoric for the occasion, the epigones cannot restrain themselves. Thus Samuel Weber's first paragraph includes the following unintentional parody: "What exactly are we taking about? What does it mean to talk, to ask 'about' . . . ? For instance, about the 'character' of an individual man? About a practice of language, of reading and rewriting, known as 'deconstruction'? About a war fought some half a century ago? About Nazism? Fascism? Collaboration? About academic institutions and academic intellectuals? What about the word 'about,' that relates the question to its object? To talk 'about' something is to position ourselves in its vicinity, to be sure, and yet nevertheless: outside it, alongside perhaps, but still at a certain remove from what we are talking about" (404).[5] This sort of destabilizing verbiage is used to advantage, however, to open up de Man's journalism to the involuted interpretive practices with which his defenders feel so much more at home. After a particularly tortuous "reading" of de Man's anti-Semitic piece, Weber finds "mirrors reflecting mirrors" with the result that the call for the Jews' isolation is innocuously reduced to a "rhetorical gesture" not intended to be taken at face value. But Weber is actually outdone in ingenuity by Timothy Bahti who, by decoding this article, has practically transformed de Man into a member of the resistance: "Under the code of *Le*

5. See Terry Eagleton's "The Emptying of a Former Self," *Times Literary Supplement* (May 26-June 1, 1989), p. 573.

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Soir's anti-Semitic special page . . . under its specific form of censorship, de Man wrote the resistance of literature and its reading" (3). The ultimate in perversity, however, comes from Richard Rand, who tries to pawn off de Man as an honorary Jew: "That Paul de Man, biographically speaking, was not himself Jewish, is nothing to the point . . . We know, for example, that Paul de Man, at the close of the Second World War, translated, into Flemish, that most Judaic of American novels, *Moby Dick* . . ." (354) Mercifully, this sort of nonsense is countered by Corngold, Mehlman and several others, who insist that an acknowledgement of de Man's collaboration be the starting point for any further responsible discussion of the affair.

What de Man the collaborator and de Man the theorist of deconstruction have to do with one another is a much more difficult question, and one with greater consequences for the defenders. Fully aware of this, they try to provide from the outset a safety net for themselves by denying that there is anything called deconstruction. Thus J. Hillis Miller uses the phrase "so-called deconstruction" or places the word in scare quotes throughout his essay. The argument for dissolving the term is that each practitioner has his or her own particular version so that what, say, Derrida does is not identical with what de Man or Miller does. But, like so many of their points, this will not bear much scrutiny. If one were to take this claim seriously, only an army of clones could ever be characterized as belonging to a movement or school. Unless the defenders are prepared to jettison *all* critical rubrics — New Criticism, Structuralism, etc. — as well, one would think, as categories of literary history such as Romanticism, their point is unconvincing. And clearly they themselves have frequently denounced New Criticism, a critical approach which, simply in virtue of its longevity, includes far more diversity than deconstruction. Moreover, one is particularly surprised to hear this modesty about deconstruction's very existence from Miller, who, trumpeting the triumph of deconstruction as president of the Modern Language Association in 1986, had no trouble using the term when it seemed to his advantage.[6] If the term had currency in 1986, it is encumbent on Miller and those who take this position to give some account of what has happened in the intervening years — apart from the inconvenient revelations about de Man — to make its usage suddenly inadequate.

At the same time, one must be careful about tarring deconstruction simply because one of its practitioners had a suspect moral character. To do so would constitute a tawdry *ad hominem* attack. From the outset, then, let it be said that one need not have been a collaborator or potential collaborator to have been a deconstructionist. There is a great deal of space, however, between this sort of specious charge and the deconstructionists' own opinion of the political effect of their theory, which is that it is manifestly one of liberation, something that, as

6. See J. Hillis Miller, "Presidential Address 1986. The Triumph of Theory, the Resistance to Reading, and the Question of the Material Base," *PMLA* 3 (May 1987), pp. 281-91.

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Miller says, "works to free people from ideological mystifications and aberrancies . . . from totalizing and totalitarian thinking" (338). Perhaps the most fruitful way to pose the question of the relation between de Man the collaborator and de Man the deconstructionist is to examine whether there is indeed anything in the political stance of deconstruction which would make it *inconsistent* to have been both.

The case for deconstruction's liberating influence rests on its purported resistance to "totalizing thinking," a claim the defenders repeat with incantatory monotony. Since no definition of the "totalizing thinking" is ever offered, one can only assume that it means what it appears to: a type of thought that lumps together disparate things under a large umbrella (with the result that crucial differences are passed over). There is the implication, too, since the term is obviously being used as indicative of the politically undesirable, that such thinking is done to carve the world up into false alliances and antagonisms. With this definition in mind, it must be admitted that any theory which helped dismantle these rigid structures of crystallized prejudice would obviously provide a helpful ground clearing for something more positive. The only problem with identifying deconstruction as such a theory is that in order to appear radically avant-garde it has itself relied almost exclusively on just such totalization. According to Derrida, deconstruction was conceived in order to combat more than two millenia of "logocentrism," the belief that reality can be grasped in an unmediated fashion by the human mind and communicated in language. In this epistemological heresy, he implicates every single "metaphysical" thinker from the pre-Socratics up through Heidegger.[7] And there can be no alternative position: one either is a deconstructionist or an espouser of "logocentrism." Such claims have caused John Ellis, in his acidly elegant *Against Deconstruction*, to refer to Derrida's characteristic mode of argument as "rhetorical absolutism" which certainly seems apt, for if these claims are not examples of "totalizing thinking" it would be hard to see what might be.[8] Nor is this sort of thinking any less apparent in de Man. Because he buys into Derrida's epistemological generalizations, he insists that *every single* work of fiction is "about" its own fictionality. Thus, once deconstructed, every work yields the same harvest — language has unmasked itself as non-referential: "The whole of literature would respond in similar fashion, although the techniques and patterns would have to vary considerably, of course, from author to author. But there is absolutely no reason why analyses of the kind here suggested for Proust would not be applicable, with proper modifications of technique, to Milton or to Dante or to Hölderlin. This will in fact be the task of literary criticism in the coming years."[9]

We search in vain, too, for any other position explicit or implicit in de Man's

7. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 3.

8. John Ellis, *Against Deconstruction* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 40.

9. Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), pp. 16, 17.

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work that might establish a normative ethics. In fact, it would be safe to say that there is something approaching disdain for what are normally thought of as ethical considerations in de Man's theory of reading. He taught his students contempt for "such horrors as 'New Critical Moral Earnestness' "[10] (a revealing charge, since New Critics are usually taken to task by opponents for their excessive formalism) and in "The Resistance to Theory" he made clear that *any* contamination of literary studies with ethics or psychology might lead in such a direction is vastly inferior to his own method: "The equation of rhetoric with psychology rather than with epistemology opens up dreary prospects of pragmatic banality, all the drearier if compared to the brilliance of the [i.e., my] performative analysis."[11] De Man does acknowledge that there is something called ethics, but what it amounts to is a recognition of his view of epistemology: "In this sense, ethics has nothing to do with the will (thwarted or free) of a subject, nor *a fortiori*, with a relationship between subjects. The ethical category is imperative (i.e., a category rather than a value) to the extent that it is linguistic and not subjective."[12] Morality in its traditional sense, then, is merely a linguistic construct, of necessity tainted by the inadequacy of language to get at the truth: "Morality is a version of the same language aporia that gave rise to such concepts as 'man' or 'love' or 'self,' and not the cause or consequence of such concepts."[13] There is nothing in de Man which would suggest any ethical imperative beyond the "insight" that we are forever trapped in this linguistic web.

One must admit it is unlikely that the Nazis were deconstructionists *avant la lettre* and so the later de Man could, had he wished, have censured them for their naive epistemology. But since there are few beyond those who sat entranced in his graduate seminar who might claim to be free of this sin, the Nazis are no more or less guilty in this regard than anyone else — a normalization of the Third Reich beyond anything dreamed of in the current German *Historikerstreit*. In sum, then, once one has shown the concern with "totalization" to be empty rhetoric, there is nothing compelling in the political or ethical implications of deconstruction which would allow it to be seen as identifiably anti-fascist. If anything, as Corngold, the respondent most intent on establishing a link between early and late de Man has pointed out, there is an ominous "inhumaneness" in both de Man's argument for collaboration as the only option available in the face of an inevitable historical process and in his subsequent theory that we are so helplessly trapped in linguistic error that to posit a self which might exercise moral choice is delusory. Whether or not one accepts Corngold's analysis, the defense that de Man's critical theory was a tacit apology for any earlier lapses — a position held by the major deconstructionists,

10. Alice Jaegar Kaplan gives this account of what she was taught by de Man as a beginning graduate student. See *Responses*, *op. cit.*, p. 278.

11. Paul de Man "The Resistance to Theory," *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p, 19.

12. De Man, *Allegories*, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 206.

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Derrida, Miller, and elsewhere Hartman[14] — appears nearly as far-fetched as the claim that he was not a collaborator in the first place.

The depressing reading continues, too, when it comes time to explain why de Man never bothered to make any public apology. Several of the respondents direct us to an essay on Rousseau's *Confessions*, where de Man argues that all accounts of our own actions must be tainted because we can never truly know our motivations. His point is not the Freudian one that the reservoirs of one's unconscious are uniquely resistant to the self-explorer but the more all-encompassing one which would see self-knowledge as one more instance of a general failure to know anything with certainty. As a result, de Man argues, any attempt at explanation just makes the situation worse because it implicates us in the further deception that we do have access to our private desires (and, remember, bad epistemology is the one "ethical" lapse de Man recognizes). Taking this apparently as the last word in probity, several defenders actually seem to suggest that de Man's silence was due to an excess of nobility: he would rather stoically bear his guilt (though they are not always sure there was any) than fall deeper into error by a desperate attempt to account for himself.

This rather bizarre notion of de Man as a latter day St. Paul is furthered by Derrida, who detects an altruism in the unwillingness to confess. To have done so, he argues, would have involved de Man in a circus of debate, robbing him of the time and energy he spent more profitably in bequeathing the world his last works, "among the most remarkable" (151). In light of all this strained and largely self-serving pleading, though, one cannot help but conclude that de Man's defenders would have been much better served had he bestowed on them a single first-rate exercise in moral hygiene, however belated, than more of the third-rate epistemology.

Perhaps in the end it was inevitable that the defenders, as if by instinct, would try to deconstruct their opponents. And appropriately, it is Derrida, whose piece had already appeared in *Critical Inquiry*, who shows the way. Foregoing his typical nuanced dismemberment of a text, he springs to the attack by comparing the methods of those who would try to establish any connection between early and late de Man with the crude tactics "of the worst totalitarian police" (152). This ill-considered charge has the grotesque but obviously intended effect of transforming de Man from a collaborator with oppressive political systems into the victim of such a regime. But why should opponents be willing to jeopardize their own humanity in order to falsely pillory de Man? Derrida answers, the epigones echo: envy and resentment. As usual, the disciples parody the master. In a particularly rancid essay, Andrzej Warminski scornfully dismisses his opponents as neurotic midgets: "Only the trivially guilt-ridden pathology of bitter academics who have always resented de Man's intellectual, i.e., critical, power would want de Man to have inscribed himself in a conversion narrative!" (388).

14. Geoffrey Hartman, "Blindness and Insight," *The New Republic* (March 7, 1988), pp. 26-30.

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(Although one's own desires must remain a mystery, it looks as if the desires of others are completely transparent). But not content to have diminished the enemy to Nietzchean slaves who would venomously have forced de Man to submit to ordinary herd morality, Warminski finally judges them to be simply inhuman: "What could make so many of these creatures crawl out from under the rocks of their Pathologies?" (389). Indeed, so great is this envy of the Belgian *Übermensch* that the Western press, according to Hamacher, has laid aside all political differences to form a united front: "Apparently *The Nation*, *Newsweek*, *La Quinzaine littéraire*, the *FAZ* [*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*], and the *Manchester Guardian* form an ideology cartel which cuts across all, sometimes enormous, political differences" (463).

While it may be granted that some journalists, worrying more about deadlines than accuracy, have had only hearsay acquaintance with deconstruction, this is not the real issue. René Wellek, a man who has thought about literary theory and criticism for most of his 80 years and is just completing a gargantuan seven-volume history of the subject, is absurdly accused by Miller — who must surely know better — of maliciously getting his information on deconstruction from *Newsweek* (341). This imputation of moral or intellectual *mauvaise foi* to anyone who would dare take issue with deconstruction is not merely due to nerves frayed by the de Man case but has characterized it from the beginning. Opponents have been typically seen as either malignant or hopelessly ignorant, often both. In this regard, Anglo-American opponents come off worst, usually labeled xenophobic for trying to preserve their own poorly cultivated turf against the invasion of high-powered continental abstractions and, of course, ignorant as well, insofar as they are unable to comprehend what they resist.[15] It is, however, precisely this unwillingness to concede the possibility of an informed, impartial criticism of the essentials of their position that has aroused a good deal of the hostility which deconstructionists attribute solely to envy and stupidity.

After all the charges and counter-charges have been fired, what finally is the significance of the case of Paul de Man? Certainly, in the long run, much less than the pyrotechnics would suggest. His spotted career, which in many ways traces Heidegger's like a Shakespearean subplot, will recede to a footnote in any consideration of the compromised life of this German philosopher, a more profound thinker and a more deeply committed collaborator. Both together will provide more unhappy evidence that one's moral life and one's intellectual life are not as tightly intertwined as Socrates would have had us believe. In the short run, not entirely fairly, revelations about de Man's early life will give the final push to the already falling theory of deconstruction. His self-serving defenders, though, like their teacher, will undoubtedly be born again and, having learned his final lesson, never mention their dubious past.

Kenneth Asher

15. See Paul de Man, *The Resistance to Theory*, *op. cit.*

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